Higher Education Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and Procedure

Version Control

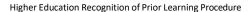|	
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Revision History

Version	New/Replacement	Summary of Changes
2.0	Replacement	Updated procedure to bring in line with validating partners and UK Quality Code for Higher Education
2.1	Replacement	Policy includes references and links to Skills and Education Group Awards for Level 4 and above non-designated HE.

Contents

This procedure will be of interest to staff, students and applicants wishing to make applications for accelerated entry onto, or within a programme of study in higher education. The procedure specifically makes clear the principles and processes that must be adhered to when making claims for recognition of prior learning (RPL), a process categorised into two distinct categories- experiential and certificated.

If you need any further advice on how this procedure works, you should contact the UCEN Manchester Management Team.

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This document is available in alternative formats on request to the UCEN Manchester Directorate at HE@ucenmanchester.ac.uk

1. Introduction

This procedure sets out the key principles and processes relating to recognition of prior learning (RPL).

Its content provides clarity regarding the rights and responsibilities within the RPL process for:

i. applicants wishing to gain accelerated entry into higher education
ii. students currently enrolled at The Manchester College/UCEN Manchester wishing to gain exemption from a module(s) not yet studied
iii. staff supporting applicants or students making a claim
iv. the Panel responsible for making RPL decisions

The procedure is written with regard to the codes and regulations as defined by the following awarding bodies:

i. Manchester Metropolitan University
ii. Sheffield Hallam University
iii. Pearson
iv. University of Huddersfield
v. Skills and Education Group Awards at Level 4 and above

Excluding Pearson programmes, in every instance the final arbiter of any RPL application will be the awarding body. Appeals can be made to Pearson in relation to an RPL outcome undertaken by the UCEN Manchester.

Definitions

It is important to distinguish between:

i. prior learning that is equivalent to the entry requirements of a programme (i.e. below level 4, 5, 6 or 7 of the FHEQ) that enables admission at the start of the programme (RPL for Admission, see Section 3), and
ii. prior learning that is equivalent to the learning within a higher education programme (i.e. equivalent to level 4,5,6 or 7 of the FHEQ) that enables a student/applicant to make a claim for academic credit for part of the programme (RPL for Academic Credit).

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.

2. RPL for Admission

Recognition of prior learning for admission is an admissions activity: Admissions Policy and Procedure should be followed. Guidance in relation to the recognition of prior learning, including the mapping of non-standard qualifications/ certificated learning and making judgements about prior experiential learning for entry to both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes is provided by the Awarding Partners.

- [Manchester Metropolitan University](#)
- [Sheffield Hallam University](#)
- [Pearson](#)
- [University of Huddersfield](#)
- [Skills and Education Group Awards](#)

3. RPL for academic credit towards a programme including advanced standing

3.1.   Purpose of Assessment

Assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, is a key element in the setting and maintenance of academic standards. It is the means by which judgements are formed as to what extent students have achieved the intended learning outcomes of a programme, or part of a programme. These judgements form the basis for evaluating student performance, for classification where appropriate, and for the award of a qualification. Crucially, both assessment and RPL are dependent upon explicit programme/qualification, level and module learning outcomes and judgements must be based upon the extent to which these are achieved by the student/applicant.

3.2.   Certificated and Experiential Prior Learning

The recognition of prior certificated learning involves the transfer of credit, or exemption from part of a programme, for learning that has previously been assessed. Here the student/ applicant has a certificate to evidence that the learning has been assessed, but it is the responsibility of the University to determine the status of that certification (including consideration of its content, volume and level) as it relates to the programme to which the applicant is now applying for RPL/advanced standing/direct entry.

The recognition of prior informal or experiential learning involves an assessment process that leads to recognition, normally through the award of credit. It is important to note that it is the learning (gained through experience) which is being assessed not the experience itself. Evidence of the learning is therefore required for assessment, not simply evidence of the experience.

In both cases recognition takes place in accordance with the partner University's Regulations.

- Manchester Metropolitan University
- Sheffield Hallam University
- Pearson
- University of Huddersfield
- Skills and Education Group Awards

As with other forms of assessment there is a responsibility to ensure that decisions are conducted transparently, fairly and consistently for all programmes or subjects.

4. Opportunity to make a claim for Recognition of Prior Learning

Prospective and current students will be made aware of the opportunity to submit a claim for recognition of prior learning through promotional materials and information published on the website. This includes the option to claim prior learning in place of specified entry requirements, when applying for acceptance on to a programme of study, and the option to make a claim for exemption from academic credit at the point of admission or during the course of the programme.

5. Responsibility of applicant or student

It is the responsibility of the applicant or student:

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

6. Method of identification of learning

6.1.   Prior experiential learning

The identification of prior experiential learning is achieved through:

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

The identification of prior learning must be conducted in accordance with the relevant university guidance.

6.2.   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

7. Admission with Credit

Applicants and enrolled students may be admitted with credit for prior learning to programmes at both undergraduate and post graduate level.

Most claims for credit are likely to be against specific modules whose learning outcomes match the certificated learning and/or the learning gained from experience. This is referred to as 'specific credit'.

If certificated, or experiential learning, does not exactly match modules specifically, but does reflect the aims and learning outcomes of the programme, RPL may be awarded for 'general credit'.

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.

8. 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.

8.1. Evidence

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.
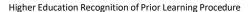
8.2. Certificated Learning

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.

8.3. Experiential Learning

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

The claim must always be accompanied by a letter or statement of support from the programme leader. Copies of interviews with the relevant programme leader are particularly useful. Copies of interviews can often reassure an RPL board that particular attention has been given to ensure that should the accreditation be granted, the applicant or enrolled student would be able to cope with the demands of the programme.

Further details on the process and a request for an application form should be made to UCENAdmissions@ucenmanchester.ac.uk

Pearson Application for approval of credit recognising prior learning (RPL)

Surname	Forename(s)
Address	
Email address:	

Present employer (if relevant):	Post held

Programme start date:

MODULE TO MODULE MAPPING TABLE (please expand as required)					
Pearson Higher National Unit	**Title**		**External Unit/Module - equivalents**	**Title**	
	Level			**Level**	
	Credits*			**Credits***	
Learning Outcomes:			**Learning Outcomes:**		

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

Amount of credit intending to be claimed:	

Please provide any other detail in support of your claim:

Student signature:		Date:	

(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:	

Chair of Academic Services Panel signature:		Date:	