

## Recognition of Prior Certificated and Experiential Learning

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## **Recognition of Prior Certificated and Experiential Learning**

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## Recognition of Prior Certificated and Experiential Learning

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Code is informed by the Guidelines on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) as published by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in September 2018.
- 1.2 The following sets out the University's expectations relating to the recognition of prior learning (RPL), both certificated and experiential (RPCL and RPEL), and provides guidance to staff responsible for making decisions in individual cases. The document **must** be read subject to the University Programme Regulations applicable to the award.

#### Authority

- 1.3 The University Education Committee is the final arbiter of the interpretation and application of this code of practice.

#### Application to Collaborative Provision

- 1.4 The University defines 'collaborative provision' as provision delivered in whole, or in part, by the staff of a partner or organisation (whether FE institution or other, whether publicly funded or not) irrespective of the location or mode of delivery, and leading to credit or an award of the University of Hull.
- 1.5 Partners **must** have in place procedures for determining applications for RPL equivalent to those set out in this Code, and which reflect the University's minimum expectations as to the amount of learning which may be attributed towards a given award of the University.
- 1.6 Where the partner has been granted admissions devolution by the University the partner is authorised to make the final decision for RPL applications relating to any programme which the partner has University approval to deliver. Where devolution has not been granted the relevant University academic unit **must** make the final decision. In instances where the same programme is delivered by multiple partners there **must** be one locus of decision-making for RPL claims regardless of the number of partners delivering that programme.

### 2. Terminology

- 2.1 The University recognises RPL in two situations:
- a) recognition of prior learning which will permit entry only at the beginning of a programme - referred to as 'matriculation' or 'general credit'.
  - b) recognition of prior learning which permits entry to a programme at a later stage or with exemption from some aspects of the programme on the basis that the RPL demonstrates achievement of some of the intended learning outcomes/competencies of the programme - referred to as 'specific credit'. Specific credit is also referred to as 'classifiable credit' where it contributes to the final classification of an Honours degree. Only credit earned on modules/programmes leading to credit or an award of the University of Hull is classifiable. This code deals with specific credit. General credit for entry purposes is considered by the admissions tutor and where a candidate does not meet the approved entry requirements a case is made to the dean for approval.

- 2.2 The scope of admissions regulations notwithstanding this Code of Practice refers solely to the form of RPL referred to in 2.1(b) above.
- 2.3 Recognition of prior learning is based on the identification and acknowledgement of equivalence between an applicant's prior learning and the provision offered at the University of Hull. The University notes the following as appropriate for recognition of prior learning:
- a) Credits awarded by the University of Hull through a programme leading to a University of Hull award or individual University modules (whether delivered by University staff or staff of a partner);
  - b) Credits or previous learning awarded by a recognised UK or overseas higher education institution;
  - c) Other certificated learning (e.g. from a professional body);
  - d) Experiential (non-certificated) learning.

### 3. Progression Agreements

- 3.1 This code applies to the consideration of applications for RPL by individuals - whether applicants to the University, or current students. It does not apply to applicants seeking RPL through a 'progression agreement' between the University and another body - whether UK-based or based overseas, although the principles applied to progression agreements are comparable to those for individual RPL applications. A progression agreement is valid only if it has been approved in accordance with the relevant code of practice. Opportunities for progression agreements **must** be discussed with the Quality Support Service at the earliest opportunity. The University's approved progression agreements are published in the University's Register of Collaborative Provision.

### 4. RPL Limitations

- 4.1 University Programme Regulations define the limitations which the University deems appropriate for consideration of RPL applications. These limitations apply to all University of Hull awards irrespective of whether the provision leading to the award is delivered by the University or collaboratively by a partner. The following details the limitations.

#### Whole modules

- 4.2 Recognition of prior learning **must** only be granted in respect of whole modules.

#### Reuse of credit

- 4.3 Credit which has previously been used - or 'cashed in' - as part of an award (whether awarded by the University of Hull or another degree awarding body) **must** not be used towards a further award unless the first award forms a recognised stage of the second award. For example, credits comprising a Certificate in HE (level 4) may not be used towards a second Certificate, but may be used towards a Diploma or Honours degree. A Foundation Degree can be used to permit entry to the Honours stage of an Honours degree

### 5. RPL Maxima

- 5.1 The University limits the amount of an award which may be achieved through RPL and requires that candidates **must** at least complete the final stage of the award sought (with limited exceptions). The following maxima apply:

| Award   | Credits for award     | RPL Permitted   | Final stage                            |
|---|-----------------------|---|--|
| University Certificates & Diplomas ('minor awards') | 60                    | 0   | (single stage)                         |
| Certificates in HE                                  | 120                   | 60  | (single stage)                         |
| Diploma in HE                                       | 240                   | 120   | Diploma stage                          |
| Foundation Degree                                   | 240                   | 180*<br><i>*subject to PSRB requirements</i>              | Final 60 credits of Intermediate stage |
| Honours degree                                      | 360/480               | 240/360*<br><i>*subject to PSRB requirements</i>          | Honours stage                          |
| PG Certificate/Graduate Certificate                 | 60                    | 0   | (single stage)                         |
| PG Diploma/Graduate Diploma                         | 120                   | 60<br><i>*subject to PSRB requirements</i>                | Diploma                                |
| PGT Masters   | 180                   | 120<br><i>*subject to PSRB requirements</i>               | Masters                                |
| Research Masters                                    | 180                   | 90  | Masters                                |
| MRes  | 180                   | 60  | Thesis                                 |
| Masters/PhD by thesis                               | 40/60 PGTS (+ thesis) | 20/40 (PGTS only)   | Thesis                                 |
| Professional Doctorate                              | 80-180 (+ thesis)     | 40-90 (up to 50%)<br><i>*subject to PSRB requirements</i> | Thesis                                 |

5.2 University regulations provide that for Honours degrees, taught masters degrees, and research masters degrees, degree classification **must** be based on credit awarded only by the University (defined as including credit awarded through a programme delivered by a partner but leading to a University of Hull award).

5.3 RPL **must** not be granted towards an award in the same subject where the applicant has failed the programme of study leading to the award through which the prior learning was

achieved. For example, an applicant who achieves 160 credits but fails the Diploma stage of their degree **must** not be granted RPL for those 160 credits towards the same degree (or a Diploma or Ordinary degree). If the student had withdrawn at this stage (before submitting all of their assessments and before the meeting of the Board of Examiners) the credits may be considered for recognition of prior learning toward that same programme of study at a later date.

*\* The University has a rule that the life of credits is 9 years although the Admissions Tutor may, at their discretion, reject an RPL application if the experience or study used in the RPL application is less than 9 years old but judged to be insufficiently current to enable the student to undertake, or re-start, their desired programme.*

*\*RPL **must** not be a substitute for, or undermine, the decisions of Boards of Examiners. Checks **should** be made on SIS or on previous minutes of Boards of Examiners to ensure this is upheld in an instance where a student withdraws from, and returns to, the same programme.*

5.4 RPL can only be granted for modules for which credits have been awarded.

## 6. Decision Making Process

### Decision making authority

6.1 The decision whether to recognise prior learning is a matter of academic judgement to be made within University regulations and the requirements of this code of practice. The award of University of Hull credit is delegated to faculty deans by Senate for the purposes of practical implementation of RPL. For Doctoral College PGTS modules, the Research Degrees Committee is responsible for determining applications.

6.2 Deans are responsible for identifying staff who will make decisions in individual cases. Each decision **must** be considered by no fewer than two members of staff, one of whom **should** be the academic unit Admissions Tutor. Both **should** have received such staff development as deemed appropriate by the dean and the Head of Admissions and Applicant Services. Particular attention **should** be paid to the complexity of advising on, and evaluating, applications for RPEL. Academic units may wish to establish an RPL Board or equivalent to make decisions.

6.3 Deans **should** inform the Head of Admissions and Applicant Services of staff responsible for RPL decisions within the faculty.

6.4 For programmes involving more than one academic unit, the relevant dean (or deans) **must** agree the allocation of responsibilities so that it is clear to both staff and applicants how applications will be processed and who has authority to decide.

### Applications for RPL

6.5 Applications, whether by applicants to the University or current students, **must** be made to the academic unit(s) responsible for the programme of study to which the RPL application relates. An application **should** be acknowledged in writing within three working days, and include guidance to the applicant on how long the academic unit expects to take to determine the application. Applications for the Doctoral College PGTS modules **must** be made to the Doctoral College.

6.6 Applications for RPL can be made retrospectively by current students although applications cannot be made after a student has already taken the first piece of summative assessment in the module(s) from which they wish to be exempted by RPL. Consideration of the merits of a retrospective application **should** include taking into account the applicant's attendance and submission record on the programme of study to date.

6.7 For applicants to the University to whom the UCAS system applies - any applicant for a full-

time degree programme for September start (other than Nursing) - the RPL application **must** be submitted directly to the relevant academic unit for consideration alongside the UCAS application. Any applications for RPL received directly by the University Admissions and Applicant Services **must** be forwarded to the relevant academic unit.

- 6.8 Academic units **must** determine whether there are periods of the year during which they will not accept applications for RPL. Where this is the case, the academic unit **must** inform the University Admissions and Applicant Services.
- 6.9 Where an application is rejected the applicant **must** be informed of the reasons for rejection, and **should** be provided with guidance on alternative options.

#### Communication of decisions

- 6.10 Where an academic unit is satisfied that it is able to make a decision on an application for RPL, the academic unit **must** inform the University Admissions and Applicant Services of the decision regarding undergraduate and taught postgraduate cases or the Doctoral College regarding research degree/PGTS cases) using Annexe 1\* of this code. The Admissions and Applicant Services/Doctoral College is responsible for informing the applicant in writing of the decision - whether acceptance or rejection. Academic units **must** not formally communicate the decision to the applicant. All decisions **must** be notified to Student Services Directorate.
- 6.11 Only credit earned on a University of Hull award is classifiable. Where a decision to accept an application involves recognition of classifiable credit, the academic unit **must** attach a copy of the applicant's official transcript recording the marks awarded for the modules relevant to degree classification. The original mark awarded for classifiable credit **must** be used in determining the applicant's degree classification.

*\* Additional information may be appended to annexe 1 in consideration of an RPL claim as deemed necessary by those judging the application but sections of annexe 1 may not be removed.*

*\*The Faculty of Health Sciences may continue to use its own variant of annexe 1 on these grounds.*

#### Complaints and appeals

- 6.12 A registered student who wishes to challenge a decision relating to their RPL application **must** do so by lodging an appeal to the Secretary of the Student Cases Committee (taught provision) or Research Degrees Committee (research provision) within 10 working days of being notified in writing of the decision. The appeal will be considered in accordance with the University Code of Practice for Academic Appeals.

#### Registration

- 6.13 Student Services Directorate **must** be informed, through the standard registration process, of students joining the university as a result of an RPL application. The academic unit **must** enter the information on the student record system detailing the applicant's module exemptions, and the module mark for accredited modules if the credit has been awarded by the University of Hull and is classifiable (see 2 above).

## **7. Evidence Required**

- 7.1 In order to recognise prior learning, the academic unit **must** assure itself that the learning derived from the prior certificated study and/or experience is equivalent to that of the learning that might have been achieved by following the exempted element(s) of the programme of study to which the applicant seeks admission. What constitutes equivalence is a matter of academic judgement.
- 7.2 Applicants are responsible for providing the academic unit with all relevant evidence to

support the application for RPL, whether certificated or experiential.

7.3 Evidence **must** accord with the following principles:

- a) **Acceptability:** there **must** be an appropriate match (in terms of breadth and depth of content) between the evidenced learning and the modules against which credit is being claimed. This is a matter of academic judgement.
- b) **Sufficiency:** the credit achieved through RPCL, or the extent of experiential learning, **must** be sufficient to support the volume of credit claimed at the correct level. All learning outcomes on the module applied for **must** be demonstrated in the application. This is a matter of academic judgement.
- c) **Authenticated:** through objective evidence from a source other than the applicant - such as an official transcript or programme specification
- d) **Currency\*:** the prior learning **must** be no greater than nine years old, and within that timescale, sufficiently contemporaneous to be still relevant to the subject

*\* Currency: The University limit is an upper threshold and it is permissible for professional body requirements to override this.*

## 8. RPCL

8.1 In determining an application for RPCL, the academic unit **should** consider the official transcript (and diploma supplement if available) produced by the HEI or other issuing body which awarded the credit. There may be instances where the applicant has not yet completed modules to be reported on a transcript, (i.e. the applicant has completed one or more certificated modules but has not completed the certificated stage). In these cases academic references from the previous university will be the main form of evidence, and any offer would be conditional.

8.2 In addition, the academic unit **should** consider:

- a) An academic reference from an appropriate person at the relevant HEI;
- b) Relevant programme and module specifications/handbooks, including, where necessary, the mapping of specific learning outcomes. (Academic units **must** provide appropriate support to applicants to conduct the mapping of learning outcomes of the prior learning to those of the programme of study in question. Annexe 1 **should** be used for this purpose);
- c) Regulations or policies explaining the allocation of credit and grading scheme of the relevant HEI (this may be provided as part of the official transcript).

8.3 An applicant may have completed a module in the subject specialist area within the discipline, but the academic unit may not offer that subject specialism. Where appropriate, this learning may be accredited/recognised for prior learning if the applicant can demonstrate that the learning outcomes/competencies achieved on the module meet programme learning outcomes/competencies on the programme applied for.

## 9. RPEL

9.1 Decisions **must** be based on a portfolio of evidence which reflects the principles set out in 7.3 above. Prior to an application being submitted informal discussion **should** take place between the academic unit and the applicant to clarify the range and type of evidence likely to be available and its potential appropriateness bearing in mind that collating such evidence, and evaluating it, is likely to be time consuming both for the applicant and for the academic unit. During such informal discussion the academic unit **should** ensure that the applicant is provided with the relevant module specifications.

- 9.2 In evaluating evidence of RPEL particular attention **should** be paid to:
- a) Identifying relevant experience and the learning achieved from that experience
  - b) Assessing the comparability of learning to the University module learning outcomes/competencies (taking into account module content and level )
  - c) Ensuring that if recognition of prior learning is granted it is likely that the applicant will be able to cope with the demands of the programme.

## **10. Monitoring and Review**

- 10.1 Academic units are responsible for monitoring applications for, and decisions relating to, RPL including tracking the performance of candidates admitted with RPL.
- 10.2 Faculties are responsible for providing an overview of the operation of RPL procedures through the Continual Monitoring, Evaluation and Enhancement (CMEE) process. Partners are responsible for providing an overview of RPL procedures in the Annual Monitoring, Review and Enhancement of Programmes process (AMREP).

## RPL (RPCL and RPEL) Application – Record of Decision To be completed by Admissions Tutors

Admissions tutors **must** complete all sections of this pro-forma for applicants or registered students who wish to be granted RPL for part of a certificated programme.

This pro-forma is to be returned to the Admissions and Applicant Services (or other designated administrative area with responsibility for admission to the programme).

For registered students the information **must** be provided to Student Services Directorate. Academic Units and Faculties **should** keep a record of all RPL records of decisions.

### Part 1 – Application Details

|                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Applicant name                        |  |
| Applicant code/Student number         |  |
| Programme of study (PoS) and PoS code |  |

#### Amount of credit exempted by RPL

Each module exempted by RPL **should** be noted, (either below or with reference to the transcript), supported by the Dean or Dean's nominee, submitted to the Admissions and Applicant Services or Student Services Directorate and recorded in the Academic Unit RPL record.

#### a) Stage credit exemptions: undergraduate

State in the box below the amount of credit to be exempted:

|      | State the total number of credits at the certificate stage (1 <sup>st</sup> 120 credits, maximum 120 credits) for which RPL is given | State the total number of credits at the diploma stage (2 <sup>nd</sup> 120 credits, maximum 120 credits) for which RPL is given |
|------|--|--|
| RPCL |  |  |
| RPEL |  |  |

#### b) Stage credit exemptions: postgraduate

State in the box below the amount of credit to be exempted:

|      | State the total number of credits at the certificate stage (1 <sup>st</sup> 60 credits, maximum 60 credits) for which RPL is given | State the total number of credits at the diploma stage (2 <sup>nd</sup> 60 credits, maximum 60 credits) for which RPL is given |
|------|--|--|
| RPCL |  |  |
| RPEL |  |  |



| Module code | Title | Level<br>(3/4/5/6/7) | State:<br>Trimester<br>(1/2);<br>SF/LT OR<br>start/end<br>dates for<br>this<br>student. |
|-------------|-------|----------------------|---|
|             |       |                      |   |
|             |       |                      |   |
|             |       |                      |   |
|             |       |                      |   |

### Part 3 - Checklist

The following questions are intended to help as a checklist for those considering RPL (RPEL or RPCL) claims:

|  | YES | NO | Comment: |
|--|-----|----|----------|
| Has a full transcript and syllabus information been received for certificated study? (This may be part of a previous institutional agreement)  |     |    |          |
| Are you satisfied with the documentary evidence (portfolio) for RPEL?<br>Are competencies and outcomes from the learning clearly defined - does the evidence confirm that the necessary learning has been gained from the experiences described? |     |    |          |
| Does the evidence confirm that the applicant has completed what they claimed?  |     |    |          |
| Is there evidence that the learning has been kept up to date/is current to the standards of the academic subject and any professional requirements?  |     |    |          |
| Is there a clear match of previous learning to those of the core modules from which specific credit exemption is sought?   |     |    |          |
| Are the knowledge, skills and competencies at the level at which credit is sought?   |     |    |          |
| Are all module prerequisites sufficiently evidenced in order to satisfy requirements of the next stage modules?  |     |    |          |
| Are regulations regarding minimum credit to gain the University of Hull award adhered to?  |     |    |          |
| Is there a need for additional evidence in support of the credit (RPCL) claim?   |     |    |          |
| Is there a need for additional evidence in support of the experiential (RPEL) claim?   |     |    |          |
| Is the applicant required to attend an interview or undertake any additional work in support of the credit claim?  |     |    |          |

If you have answered any of the above questions in the shaded areas for any of the above you **must** liaise with the applicant further before making a recommendation of offer. The decision to give RPL of applicants not meeting the requirements may be given in exceptional circumstances but a written rationale **must** be made and recorded in the annual report on RPL decisions.

## Part 4 - Confirmation

Admissions Tutors and the Dean of Faculty (or nominee, for example the *faculty* admissions tutor) confirm the successful RPL application using one of the sections below. The requirement for a second signatory is consistent with university requirements regulating the award of University of Hull credit.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| I confirm that full and appropriate consideration has been given to the learning achieved by the applicant using the programme or syllabus information / transcript / portfolio in order to recommend the candidate for RPCL or RPEL as indicated above. |  |
| Signature of Admissions Tutor  |  |
| Date   |  |
| Signature of Dean or nominee of the Dean   |  |
| Date   |  |

## Version Control

| <b>Version</b> | <b>Author</b>   | <b>Date approved</b> | <b>Relevant sections</b>  |
|----------------|-----------------|----------------------|---|
| 2 11           | Quality Manager | Housekeeping         | Section 3 - replaces Academic Partnership Office with Quality Support Service.<br>Section 10 – updates monitoring and review to include UoH Continual Monitoring, Evaluation and Enhancement (CMEE) Process |
| 2 12           | Lisa Tees       | 17 March 2022        | Replaces APL with RPL – recognition of prior learning - to reflect sector norm.   |
|                |                 |                      |   |
|                |                 |                      |   |