POLICY

Recognition of Prior Learning Policy – Higher Education

[Document Reference:]

Document administration

Policy family	Learning
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SLT lead	Assistant Principal – Higher Education
Department	
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Version control log

Date	Version No	Summary of changes	Reviewed by (SLT lead)
June 2021	1	Original version	VP/HTE
Sept 2024	2	This policy has been identified as being needed following external review with the OU and reference to the OU has been removed	

Contents

Appendices

Associated documents

Document	Description and link
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

1. Purpose

1.1: The purpose of this policy 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.

1.3: In line with the policy review dates, the college 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:
"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 though the awarding of credit. The essential feature of this process if 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 of 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 RPL
The RPL 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:

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?

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 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.

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.

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.

4.12: Ofqual Issued a Statement Qualifying the use of RPL by Eplaining:

"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".

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.

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 permittable for 50% of overall qualification credits (e.g., if 120, student may only apply for 60 RPL credits). However, for SHU provision reference the relevant RPL Policy .For University of Hull provision reference the RPL document

Should students wish to appeal RPL decisions, they will need to do so via the Appeals Policy

5. Procedure

5.1: 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).
- 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.

5.2: 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.

5.3: 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.

5.4: 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.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

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

6.2: 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.

6.3: The College will use RPL information to improve the quality of its services and to check how effective the process is for supporting students.

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 (Matthew.Brown@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 *(please delete as appropriate)*
Name of course that you want to claim prior learning against:	
Type of claim:	Accredited learning / Experiential learning*/ Credit Transfer *(please delete as appropriate)*