

Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and Procedure

Reference Code:	RPL-HE
Version:	5.1.
Date of Implementation:	March 2022
Originator:	Dean of University Centre
Policy developed in consultation with:	Deputy Principal
Approval Date:	September 2022
Approval by:	HE Strategy Group
Date of Next Review:	September 2023

Revision History

Version	Purpose/Change	Date
5.0	Update to heading and formatting to align with other HE policies.	March 2022
5.1.	Addition of how credit and exemptions are used for the purposes of progression and for the award and classification of qualifications (2.8.) Additional information on the grading of RPL (2.9.) Periodic review of policy.	September 2022

Please contact HEoffice@liv-coll.ac.uk or the College Reception if you would like this document in an alternative form.

Contents	Page
1. Introduction	2
2. The Policy	2
3. Principles of RPL	3
4. The Procedure	4
5. Appendix 1: Application for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	6

This policy is written in line with the Expectations and Core practices of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code), which are a key reference point for higher education providers in all parts of the UK.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the process for identifying, evidencing and assessing learning that has its source in experience and/or previous formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts. This includes knowledge and skills gained within school, college and university and outside formal learning situations, such as through life and work experiences.
- 1.2. This policy seeks to enable learners to avoid the duplication of learning and assessment. There are two ways in which this will be achieved:
 - Recognition of Prior Certified Learning (RPCL): The opportunity to transfer credits, i.e. to recognise previously accredited achievement from within or outside the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) to count towards other qualifications.
 - Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL): For individuals with learning or achievements that have not been certificated/accredited it may be possible to assess and validate these through the RPL process. These achievements may then count towards a qualification.
- 1.3. The application of RPL procedures may vary across the different Higher Education courses due to the differing needs of particular courses and students and the awarding body or validating partner.

2. The Policy

- 2.1. In order to achieve the above, a learner must produce valid and reliable evidence of learning to support any claims based on experience. A learner may claim RPL against a whole unit or several units. It is not possible to award part units, but where the RPL evidence does not fully meet the needs of a complete unit, the missing information may be provided via the same assessment processes that are undertaken by a taught group of learners.
- 2.2. For RPCL, the College allows a maximum of 10 years prior to the start of study on the registered qualification and the minimum RPL credit claim permitted is 20 credits.
- 2.3. For RPEL, in order to achieve recognition of achievement there are two options open to the learner:
 - Undertake the same assessments as those following the formal course of learning and assessment that lead to the desired unit or qualification. These assessments may be undertaken without attending the teaching sessions.
 - Submit a portfolio of evidence based on previous learning, skills and / or competence cross referenced to the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of the unit or units for which RPL is being sought.
- 2.4. Under some circumstances there may be a limit to the proportion of a qualification that can be achieved by either credit transfer or RPL. A student may be awarded recognition for prior learning (certified, experiential or uncertified), towards the requirements of a named award up to two-thirds¹ of the total credit requirements for that award.

¹ two-thirds of RPL is only permitted for full, three-year bachelor's degrees (360 credits) or full Masters degrees (a minimum of 180 credits) and not sub-awards, where the usual maximum is 50%.

2.5. RPL cannot be recognised against the following:

- Level 6 of a full 360 credit bachelor's degree
- the thesis/dissertation module of a bachelor's degree, where the student is required 120 credits to gain the award

2.6. A higher education award which has been certified by Pearson, cannot be used as prior learning to contribute to the achievement of another Pearson award of an equivalent level. Individual units are not defined as an award.

2.7. Where RPEL is used to determine whether learning outcomes have been met on a Pearson Higher National award, the maximum grade that the student can achieve for that unit will be a Pass. Where RPCL is undertaken, then this will be assessed for where applicants meet Merit or Distinction criteria across all learning outcomes.

2.8. Where RPEL is used to determine whether learning outcomes have been met on an Open University programme, any credit awarded will be recorded as a pass with no grade associated.

2.9. For programmes validated by the Open University, performance in work for which an award of credit for prior learning has been made is not taken into account in the calculation of the final award.

2.10. The learner must play an active role in the process and must produce evidence and map it to the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of all units they wish to claim. Appropriately trained staff from the course team concerned should be available to give specialist advice on this process. The individual wishing to make the claim may also require the support of their employer or other organisation (e.g. if they have worked as an unpaid volunteer) in order to be able to confirm achievement of assessment criteria for which there is no tangible evidence, e.g. practical tasks.

3. Principles of RPL

3.1. The City of Liverpool College University Centre adopts the recommended approach of five principles of RPL², which are as follows:

- RPL is a valid method of enabling individuals to claim credit for units and qualifications of the RQF, irrespective of how the learning took place and the assessments undertaken. There is no difference between the achievement of the required standards through prior learning and through a formal programme of study.
- RPL must comply with all regulatory requirements for assessment. RPL policies, processes, procedures, practices and decisions should be transparent, rigorous, reliable, fair and accessible to individuals and stakeholders to ensure that users can be confident of the decisions and outcomes of RPL.

² 'Claiming Credit – Guidance on the recognition of prior learning within the Qualifications and Credit Framework'

- RPL is a learner-centred voluntary process. The individual should be offered advice on the nature and range of evidence considered appropriate to support a claim for assessing RPL, and given guidance and support to make his or her claim.
- The process of RPL is subject to the same standard of quality assurance and monitoring processes as any other form of learning and assessment.
- Assessment methods for RPL must be of equal rigour as other assessment methods, must be fit for purpose and relate to the evidence of learning. An individual may claim RPL for any whole unit unless the assessment criteria of a unit states otherwise. For example, if an external assessment sets the standard of learning outcome that a learner must achieve, then the learner must pass the external assessment to achieve the unit and gain the credit.

4. The Procedure

4.1. The City of Liverpool College University Centre will expect the following elements to be present in any RPL application:

Stage 1: Awareness raising regarding claiming of credit – information, advice and guidance

Once learners have decided to consider their learning for RPL purposes, they will need to know about:

- How to claim credit via the RPL process: Applicants will be expected to complete an application form which will then be sent to the College Admissions team (applications@liv-coll.ac.uk) in The Learning Exchange Centre (See Appendix 1).
- Sources of professional support and guidance available to individuals and employers: Applicants / employers will have the chance to speak to HE Programme Leaders and Heads of School with relation to programme entry requirements and content.
- The administrative process for RPL applications; timelines, appeals processes, and any fees or subsidies: HE Programme Leaders and Heads of School will respond to the applicant 10 working days after receipt of the RPL Application Form. Any appeals process will be dealt with as per the College HE Policy: *HE Appeals Against Assessment Decisions Policy*.
- The currency of existing evidence, qualification, experience, skills or competence (i.e. whether the evidence relates to current learning. Where centres and / or professional, statutory or regulatory bodies have specific requirements and / or time limits for the currency of evidence, certification or demonstration of learning, these should be made clear and transparent)

Stage 2: Pre-assessment – gathering evidence and giving information

- When an individual has decided to pursue an RPL route towards achievement it is vital that the candidate is fully informed of the RPL process and has sufficient support to make a viable claim and to make decisions about evidence collection and presentation for assessment.
- During this stage the candidate will carry out the evidence collection and develop an assessment plan. The evidence required for the award of credit will depend on the purpose, learning outcomes and assessment criteria for the relevant unit within the RQF.

Stage 3: Assessment / documentation of evidence

- Assessment as part of RPL and within the RQF is a structured process for gathering and reviewing evidence and making judgements about a candidate's prior learning and experience in relation to unit standards.
- Assessment must be valid and reliable to ensure the integrity of units and qualifications and the RPL system as a whole. The assessment process for RPL must be subject to the same quality assurance process used by the College as any other of the assessment process. Learners' work which contributes towards their claim for credit via the RPL process should be internally and externally verified and all achievement documented as for conventional learner achievement. All RPL-related achievement should be marked as such in all documentation.

Stage 4: Awarding credit

Awarding organisations are responsible for awarding credit and for the final decision College will seek the conformation of the awarding organisations³. The procedure is the same as for other forms of assessment. The credit is recorded in the learner record.

³ For HE programmes validated by The Open University, approval would not need to be sought from the awarding body. The decision to award credit would sit with the College.

Stage 5: Feedback

After the assessment the assessor will need to give feedback to the candidate, discussing the results and giving support and guidance on the options available to the candidate, which may include, for example, further learning and development.

Stage 6: Appeal

If claimants wish to appeal against a decision made about their claim for credit (via the RPL process) they would need to follow the appeals process that exists within the *HE Appeals Against Assessment Decisions Policy*: <https://www.liv-coll.ac.uk/study-at-the-college/higher-education/he-policies-and-procedures/>

Stage 7: Collating information on the use of RPL

In order to quantify the use of RPL processes, external verifiers will be required to identify the provision where RPL has been applied. Collated information about the use of RPL and credit exemption will be made available as part of the annual quality process.

4.2. Direct Entry Via Stage Exemption

The RPL policy allows for candidates to enter stage 2 or stage 3 of an undergraduate qualification on the basis of completion of an appropriate certificated qualification from a recognised UK HE programme of study.

With stage exemption of this kind, it will be recorded on the student's transcript that stage exemption was awarded, but credit for the stage(s) from which the student was exempted would not be transferred to the validated awards.

Appendix 1.

APPLICATION FOR THE RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL)

Applicant identification number:	
Surname:	Title:
First names:	
Address for correspondence:	
Postcode:	Telephone (Home):
(Mobile):	(Work):

Programme Applied for at The City of Liverpool College University Centre:
Previous Institution:
Previous Programme of Study:
Dates of Attendance:
Qualification Gained + Grade (if appropriate):
Language of Qualification + Grade (if appropriate):
Previous Institution:
Previous Programme of Study:
Dates of Attendance:
Qualification Gained (if appropriate):
Language of Qualification (if appropriate):

Evidence Supplied by the Applicant (please attach copies with this form):

- ☐ Copies of relevant certificates/diplomas
- ☐ Module definitions from applicant's previous educational establishments
- ☐ Portfolio of work/life experiences together with knowledge and skills gained
- ☐ Supporting letters and/or other supporting evidence (please specify)

Please note that we may ask for original copies of certification before we can guarantee a place on the programme applied for.

Candidate Signature:

Date: