

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy

The Open University Validated Programmes

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 This policy aims to provide guidance and clarity to the students, staff, employers and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies who are involved in RPL.
- 1.2 RPL enables recognition of achievement from a range of activities using an appropriate assessment methodology. Provided that the assessment requirements of a given module or qualification have been met, the use of RPL is acceptable for accrediting a module or part of a programme through a process of credit transfer, within the limits specified in the Open University Regulations for Validated Award Document.
- 1.3 Assessment of prior learning may be requested by the applicant in relation to how (s)he meets one or more of the entry requirements of the relevant programme. RPL may also be used to demonstrate equivalence of learning against module learning outcomes.

2. Terminology

The terminology used in this policy is described below:

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL): The term 'recognition' is used to describe the process whereby applicants of all ages and backgrounds are eligible to receive recognition and formal credit for learning acquired in the past through formal study and through work and other life experiences. RPL has two widely recognised forms: prior experiential learning (i.e. learning that has taken place in the workplace) and prior certificated learning (i.e. learning that has been assessed and for which credit has been awarded, often by other HEIs inside the UK).

3. General Principles

- 3.1 A student admitted on the basis of uncertificated learning and experience or through prior certified learning is subject to the same principles of admission as all other students on that programme.

- 3.2 Subject to the requirements of any Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements the College has discretion to admit a student with exemption from certain elements of the programme or with specific credit.
- 3.3 A student may be awarded recognition for prior learning (certified, experiential or uncertified), towards the requirements of a named award up two-thirds of the total credit requirements for that award. Two-thirds of RPL is only permitted for full, three-year bachelor's degrees (360 credits) and not sub-awards, where the usual maximum is 50%.
- 3.4 The minimum RPL credit claim permitted is 20 credits which is the smallest credit bearing module size.
- 3.5 Recognition for prior learning (certified, experiential or uncertified) is not permitted at level 6 of a Bachelor's Degree or for the thesis/dissertation module, where students are expected to complete 120 credits in order to gain the award.

Direct Entry via Stage Exemption

- 3.6 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 programmes of study.
- 3.7 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 OU validated awards.

4. Admission Process

- 4.1 Applications for consideration of RPL should normally be submitted prior to commencement of the programme.
- 4.2 Applications should be considered by the Teaching, Learning & Assessment (TLA) Committee.
- 4.3 Applications should detail the amount and level of credit being claimed and details of any modules that the applicant wishes to be exempted from; detail of

what the applicant has achieved that merits recognition and any appropriate evidence supporting the claim.

4.4 For recognition of prior learning this will normally include a transcript from the applicant's previous institution outlining the credits and marks obtained previously as well as module outlines as appropriate; for experiential learning this may consist of a portfolio of work demonstrating how the applicant meets the learning outcomes of the module being waived.

4.5 Where the Teaching, Learning & Assessment (TLA) Committee, is satisfied that learning being claimed for is of an appropriate level, that the learning outcomes of any previous learning are equivalent to the learning outcomes of the programme that the applicant is now registering for and that the evidence provided confirms the achievement by the applicant of these learning outcomes, then the award of RPL credit may be confirmed. The TLA Committee should arrange for the student to be advised of their decision and any exemptions, and the student record system should be updated to record the award of credit.

5. Evaluation of RPL

5.1 Any decision on allowing RPL must be considered in accordance with the relevant programme regulations.

5.2 Mechanisms for assessing prior learning must be rigorous in ensuring that the learning which has taken place and is presented as RPL is equivalent to the learning that would have otherwise occurred had the student studied all elements of the programme of study without RPL i.e. that equivalent learning outcomes have been met.

5.3 The evaluation of an application for RPL must centre on the demonstration by the applicant of the skills, knowledge and understanding required to progress successfully within the relevant programme. The focus is therefore on assessing

the comparability of the outcomes of prior learning to those of the module or programme.

5.4 All learning must have been assessed in order that students can be seen to have demonstrated the achievement of the specified learning outcomes.

5.5 Where an application proceeds to assessment, the TLA Committee must define the method by which they will assess whether the applicant has achieved the learning outcomes being claimed for. This may be by formal examination, completion of a piece of coursework or similar, production of a portfolio of work or some other method at the discretion of the TLA Committee. The assessment method should be devised taking the following into account:

- Recognition is given for learning, not for experience alone.
- The learning that is recognised should be transferable, and not just context specific.
- Credit awarded as a result of recognition of prior experiential learning is of the same value as credit gained through formal learning.
- The applicant is responsible for demonstrating their prior learning

5.6 Reasons for rejection of applications for RPL may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- There is insufficient evidence to confirm that the learning claimed for is of the appropriate credit level.
- There is insufficient evidence to confirm that the learning outcomes claimed are the equivalent of relevant learning outcomes for the module or programme.
- The learning claimed for took place outside of a reasonable timescale before the end of the programme of study to which the application relates.

- The student has not been able to demonstrate achievement of appropriate learning outcomes from the learning claimed.
- RPL is not appropriate for the relevant programme of study.

6. Appeals

6.1 Appeals against decisions in respect of applications for RPL will only be considered where there is clear evidence of a significant administrative or regulatory error; there is no provision for appeal against the academic judgement of the TLA Committee.

6.2 Any appeal must be made in writing and submitted within 14 days from the date of issue of the decision, citing the grounds and basis of the appeal, with evidence as appropriate.

VERSION	AUTHER	DATE	CHANGES
V1	Farhad Keissarian	1. 02 .2018	Original Version
V2	Farhad Keissarian	1. 02 .2020	None
V3	Farhad Keissarian	1. 02 .2021	None
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