Recognition of Learning (RPL)

Applicant/Student Handbook[[1]](#footnote-1)

2022-23 Academic Year

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**1. Introduction**

Teesside University recognises that students may enter higher education with valuable knowledge and skills developed through a range of vocational, professional and other contexts. If this applies to you, you may wish to consider a process called **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**. This may allow you to join a course without the formal entry requirements, enter a course at a later point as a result of previous learning, or be exempted from specific module(s). This may mean that you could complete your course in a shorter time[[2]](#footnote-2). Through the RPL process, you could be awarded credit based on your previous learning and experiences.

RPL is a process by which the University seeks to establish that some relevant, measurable, substantial and significant learning has taken place. The process considers whether the *Learning Outcomes* of the course you are interested in are matched to your previous learning and experience, and an academic judgement will be made about how much of a course (or the admissions requirements) you can be exempted from. In some cases, this may require a formal decision from an Assessment Board. The University needs to ensure that all students who receive a Teesside University award have demonstrated have met all the course requirements (learning outcomes).

If you are applying for an **Apprenticeship course**, you will undertake an initial needs assessment where consideration of your prior learning and experience necessary in relation to occupational competence will be identified prior to commencing your course. The assessment will also consider whether you meet academic requirements of the course, therefore, **you will not be required to undertake the standard RPL application** referred to in this Handbook. The relevant apprenticeship admissions team will contact you in relation to this.

Where courses are recognised by a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) there may be restrictions on applications through RPL. You are advised to contact the course leader/admissions tutor/RPL Co-ordinator for further information before commencing on the RPL process.

**2. Outcomes**

There are a number of outcomes which may be achieved through a successful RPL claim:

a) Admission to a course with RPL providing exemption from the course entry requirements

b) Exemption from one or more modules and/or levels of a course with RPL

c) Credit Transfer through recognition of a qualification achieved by a student located within the [Credit Framework for England](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/higher-education-credit-framework-for-england). This may include internal credit transfer or applications through the [Student Transfer Policy](https://www.tees.ac.uk/docs/index.cfm?folder=Student%20regulations&name=Academic%20Regulations&folder_id=44).

d) Direct Entry with RPL

e) Articulation through an articulation agreement with a third-party credit-based course leading to direction admission or direct entry.

Applicants/Students will be notified of one of the following decisions as a result of an RPL Claim:

1. Award RPL as requested
2. Award RPL for part of the application (e.g. award RPL at L4 but not L5)
3. Request additional information which may include testing whether the student can demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes through a piece of assessed work or interview
4. Reject an application.

**3. Definitions**

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| Recognition of Prior Learning | A general term used to refer to the formal recognition, assessment and award of credit for prior learning. |
| Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning [RP(C)L] | The identification, assessment and award of credit for learning gained prior to a student’s intended or current course, which has been certificated by a recognised body (normally an education, professional or training body) |
| Recognition Prior Experiential Learning [RP(E)L] | The identification, assessment and award of credit for learning and achievement obtained outside of formal education or training such as work experience, voluntary activity or other learning which has not been formally assessed or certificated. |
| Direct Entry | Admission to a course at a level other than the first year of that course on the basis of prior learning. |
| Credit | A means of quantifying and recognising learning whenever and wherever it is achieved. Standard UK qualifications (such as an honours degree) have credit values that are defined within the [Credit Framework for England](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/higher-education-credit-framework-for-england). A successful outcome from a RPL application will lead to the award of Credit and a Level will also be attached to that credit. |
| General credit | An indication of the total value of prior learning expressed in credits. An indication of the academic level will also be provided. It is not directly related to the intended course. |
| Specific credit | Specific credit is established against the requirements of a named, specific course and/or modules and its learning outcomes. |
| Level of Study | Most qualifications have a level of difficulty. The first year of a standard undergraduate course is normally Level 4. The [Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF)](http://www.tees.ac.uk/docs/DocRepo/Admissions/Qualifications%20Framework.doc) provides further information on the levels of standard qualifications. |
| Course | The term used to describe a collection of modules that lead to a named “award”. A student will apply to join a specific course. |
| Module | A module is a basic building block for all academic awards within the University. It is a discrete unit of learning which is separately assessed. Each module will be defined in terms of credits, level, aims, learning outcomes and a learning, teaching and assessment strategy. The standard module size for an undergraduate course at Teesside University is 20 credits. |
| Learning Outcomes | A statement of what the student should know, understand or be able to do at the end of the module, level or course. Through the RPL claim, the University will assess the student’s knowledge and skills against the relevant learning outcomes of a module and/or level. The RPL process will look to match the evidence presented by the student, of their knowledge and skills, to the learning outcomes of the level/module(s) for which credit is being sought. |

Detailed definitions can be found in the University [RPL Policy](http://www.tees.ac.uk/docs/index.cfm?folder=Student%20Regulations&name=Academic%20Regulations).

**4. Limitations on RPL Claims (Maximum Credit Allowances)**

The minimum number of credits that can be considered for exemption is the smallest sized whole module within the course. Further information can be found on the [Programme Catalogue](https://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/about/public_information/programme_catalogue.cfm). RPL cannot be awarded against individual learning outcomes.

The Maximum credit allowances against each standard Teesside University Qualification are as follows (if the course you wish to seek exemption for is not detailed below, please see Appendix A of the [RPL Policy](http://www.tees.ac.uk/docs/index.cfm?folder=Student%20Regulations&name=Academic%20Regulations).)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **AWARD** | **MINIMUM CREDIT REQUIRMENTS FOR AWARD** | **MAXIMUM RPL CLAIM** |
| Certificate of Higher Education/  Higher National Certificate | 120 credits at L4 | 60 credits |
| Diploma of Higher Education/  Higher National Diploma | 120 credits at L4 plus  120 credits at L5 | 120 credits (no more than 60 at L5) |
| Honours Degree | 120 credits at L4 plus  120 credits at L5 plus  120 credits at L6 | 300 credits (no more than 60 at L6) |
| Integrated Master’s Degree | 120 credits at L4 plus  120 credits at L5 plus  120 credits at L6 plus  120 credits at L7 | 300 credits (no more than 60 at L7) |
| Postgraduate Certificate | 60 credits at L7 | 30 credits |
| Postgraduate Diploma | 120 credits at L7 | 60 credits |
| Master’s Degree | 180 credits at L7 | 120 credits |
| Professional Doctorate | 540 credits with no more than 120 at L7 and rest at L8 | 120 credits L7. Refer to specific course for additional requirements. |

**5. Costs and impact on Funding**

The University does not charge for assessment of RPL claims. If your claim is successful, you will be awarded the exemptions and this will reduce the total amount of fees payable, depending upon the level and amount of RPL you have been awarded. Fees are not payable for modules which have a successful RPL claim.

However, if you are intending to undertaking a postgraduate course using a loan, there may be an impact on your eligibility for the student loan and you should seek advice before progressing with your RPL claim. See also: [Master's Loan: Eligibility - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/masters-loan/eligibility).

**6. Considerations when making a RPL application**

Advantages:

* You could join a course based on experience rather than formal qualifications.
* You could complete your course in a shorter timeframe.
* You will not have to repeat previous learning.
* You will not need to attend learning and teaching or submit assessments for the modules you are exempted from.
* You will not have to pay fees for the modules you are exempted from.

Considerations:

* You may not have as much time/contact with your peers, so you may not have access to the collective knowledge and experience and sharing of practice.
* You may miss out on opportunities to gain additional knowledge/skills.
* If you do not join at the start of the course, you may have little time to adjust to the demands of academic study, particularly at a higher level.
* Any marks gained from previous study will not be accepted as part of an RPL application, only credit will be awarded.

Please discuss your potential RPL application with the School RPL Co-ordinator/Admissions Tutor in order to make an informed decision.

If you are an international student, there may be additional requirements in order to receive a visa to study at Teesside. Therefore, whilst all applications for RPL will be considered in the same way for all students, the awarding of RPL may impact on a Tier 4 visa Application so please contact the Admissions Tutor for the course as soon as possible.

**7. Applications**

The Application form (portfolio) and Guidance Notes for applicants can be found at: [RPL site](https://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/fulltime/rpl.cfm). The same proforma should be completed for RPCL or RPEL applications, but not all sections will be relevant for RPCL applications.

You will be required to assemble the evidence to support the RPL claim and the application, and all supporting evidence must be submitted in English. Original qualification certificates will be required to support your claim.

If you have successfully completed a Higher National award (HNC/HND) and you submit an application for Direct Entry to a related Higher National Award or Undergraduate/Integrated Masters Award, the course leader will review your submission against the relevant modules and map to the learning outcomes. If your case is supported, you will not need to complete the RPL application process. Similarly, if you have completed a Foundation Degree and submit an application to the related undergraduate/integrated master’s award, the course leader will review the submission and if supported, you will not need to complete the RPL application process. All other applications for Direct Entry to a course will need to follow the standard process.

An RPL application should be made as soon as possible prior to the academic year you wish to start the course, normally alongside the application for entry to the course. However, if the relevance of your prior learning becomes clear after you have started on your course, an application may be made within the first four weeks of the official start date of the course.

The University will assess all RPL applications against the following principles:

* **Relevance** – there should be an appropriate match between the evidence you present, the intended study and the learning claim
* **Sufficiency** – the evidence you submit should fully demonstrate the achievement of the learning claimed at the appropriate level and be sufficient to cover the learning outcomes of the module(s) on the intended course.
* **Authenticity** – the evidence should relate to your own efforts and achievements. Where your evidence relates to a team activity, your individual contribution should be clearly demonstrated. The University may reject an application if it has reason to believe the evidence provided is not genuine.
* **Currency** – the evidence should relate to current learning which is normally defined as completed up to five years prior to the start date of your intended award. Exceptionally, consideration will be given to learning that was completed more than five years ago where it can be demonstrated that the required learning has been kept up to date and remains appropriate and relevant.
* **Learning Outcomes** – you will be assessed to ensure that the learning which is presented for RPL is equivalent to the learning that would otherwise have occurred had you studied all parts of the module/course without RPL. Consideration will be given to ensure you are not disadvantaged by the award of RPL.
* **Expectations** – in line with ethical admissions practices, the University will only admit you to a course of study if there is a reasonable expectation that you will be able to complete it successfully.

Please ensure your application is:

* **Descriptive** – clearly describes the context of the learning activities in terms of when, where, with whom, etc.
* **Detailed** – be specific about what you have learnt and how you have used that learning. Details of the learning experience itself are not required. Please only include relevant details on the application.
* **Evidence-based** – you must include evidence of the learning you are referring to such as certificates, reports, documentation from trailing courses, websites, etc.

The University staff considering your application need to be able to understand the details of your application in order to assess it. The RPL Co-ordinator can provide guidance.

Applications will normally be assessed within 56 days of the submission date, provided the submission for RPL is made by the application deadline for the course. If you have made an RPL application after starting on a course, you should continue to study all parts of the course and undertake the assessment until a decision is communicated to you.

**8. Appeals**

Appeals against decisions relating to admission to a course of study, including though RPL, should be made as detailed in the [Admissions Policy](https://www.tees.ac.uk/docs/index.cfm?folder=Student%20regulations&name=Admissions%20Regulations&folder_id=45).

1. This Handbook is not applicable to students on Apprenticeship courses who should consult their admissions tutor/course leader [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Please note if you are applying for/on a Taught Masters or Professional Doctorate course, any credits awarded through RPL may impact on your eligibility for a student loan. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)