



## Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

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## **Contents**

	<b>Page</b>
1. Introduction	3
2. Definitions	4
3. Credit	6
4. Credit Allowances	7
5. Courses of Study Exempt from RPL Applications	7
6. Principles of Assessing RPL	7
7. The Decision Making Process	8
8. Notification Process	10
9. Unsuccessful Applications	10
10. Appeals Process	11
Appendix A: Maximum Credit Allowance	12
Appendix B : RPL process flowchart	14

## 1. Introduction

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The University's Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy forms part of the University's Admissions Policy. Learning obtained through life experiences or alternative means of educational provision such as work related, on-line or with different types of providers is included in this Policy.

The Policy covers the process of applying for admission and advanced standing using RPL as well exemption from individual modules.

Outcomes from the RPL process could be:

**1.1 Admission with RPL:** a decision to admit to the normal entry point of a course. Where an applicant has certificated learning that is at a lower level than the requirements for the course of study, a judgement will be made as to the relevance of that learning in terms of whether it meets or contributes to meeting the entry requirements of the course.

**1.2 Advanced Standing:** an applicant may be granted permission to begin a course of study with credit granted for a full level of the course already achieved in recognition of previously completed studies and/or prior learning.

**1.3 Articulation:** process for formal recognition of third party credit based courses for direct admission or admission with advanced standing to awards of the University. Such arrangements will require an Articulation Agreement. Further details are available in Section E of the University's [Quality Framework](#).

**1.4 Credit Transfer:** Where an individual has completed, within the last 5 years, the exact same module as currently exists in the course, this will be dealt with as a credit transfer. This will transfer the credits to the student's new course. If an individual has completed a previous level of a course, with the exact same modules, and is returning at a later point to complete the next level of a course this will be dealt with as Advanced Standing (see above).

**1.5 Exemption with RPL:** a decision to exempt the applicant from one or more individual modules within the course of study, on the basis that the applicant has demonstrated achievement of the learning outcomes from the module.

The University is committed to the provision of vocationally relevant education on a flexible basis so as to maximise opportunities for access and progression and to encourage participants to recognise the value of, and engage in, opportunities for Continuing Professional Development.

The University seeks to recognise prior learning, where possible, by formally recognising varied learning experiences of potential students and by awarding credit for these for University courses. Applicants are encouraged to identify the learning already achieved through training, work and previous educational experience. This learning is assessed against the learning outcomes of the modules claimed, and credit is awarded in accordance with the University's credit limit framework for RPL (please see **Appendix A** for maximum credit allowances).

This policy identifies the principles for decisions to be made about prior learning. In order to maximise the use of subject expertise, RPL decisions are made at School level.

This policy applies to all courses of study that operate under Teesside University academic regulations. Unless agreed otherwise, all RPL applications to collaborative partner organisations of the University will be dealt with by the appropriate School. Collaborative organisation staff may support and inform the assessment process but the decision on the award of credits will be a University decision.

## **2. Definitions**

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### **2.1 Recognition of Prior Learning [RPL]**

RPL is a process for recognising prior experiential learning or prior certificated learning for academic purposes. This recognition may give the learning a credit value in a credit-based structure and allow it to be counted towards the completion of a course of study and the award(s) or qualifications associated with that course of study.

The term 'RPL' is used in this policy to encapsulate the activity formally taken by the University to establish that some relevant, substantial and significant element of learning has taken place. Such learning may have been recognised previously by an education provider (prior certificated learning), or it may have been achieved by reflecting upon experiences outside the formal education and training systems, (prior experiential learning). Broadly there are two types of RPL:

## **2.2 Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning [RP(C)L]**

This is the identification, assessment and formal acknowledgement of learning and achievement which has previously been assessed and certificated prior to the entry to a course of study.

## **2.3 Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning [RP(E)L]**

This is the identification, assessment and formal acknowledgement of learning and achievement outside of formal education or training systems which may include work experience, voluntary activity or other occupational learning which is not usually certificated but is considered and recognised for academic purposes:

- as the basis for admission to a course at the named point of entry
- for exemption against specific modules within the course
- for advanced standing, i.e. being granted entry to a later level of the course rather than the entry point on the basis that the learning outcomes of earlier levels and, by definition, relevant module outcomes, have been achieved.

Learning may take place in a variety of contexts including:

- higher education courses
- work situations (paid and voluntary)
- training courses in formal (e.g. further education colleges) and informal settings and Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
- on-line learning
- more generally, through a variety of life experiences.

### 3. Credit

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**3.1 General Credit:** a decision to award credit on the basis of both certificated and non-certificated learning. This is the credit attached to any Higher Education [HE] course or to other credit rated qualifications. The rating represents the academic level of the course and the average amount of time, in notional learning hours, required to complete it. When a student's prior learning is assessed, it may also be assigned general credits (frequently a combination of the assessment of certificated and experiential learning). This general credit rating gives an indication of the total value of a student's prior learning expressed in credits. It gives an indication of the academic level an individual has attained, but does not relate this to an intended course of study. Thus, if the admission requirement to a specific course is a first degree or equivalent, irrespective of discipline, a RPL student could satisfy this with the requisite number of general credits.

**3.2 Specific Credit:** a decision to award credits on the basis of exemption or advanced standing. When credit is claimed against a particular course of study by way of exemption or advanced standing, then "general credit" must be translated into "specific credit":

- as a measure of the amount of credit that can be allocated towards a particular course
- in recognition of there being appropriate evidence of prior achievement available
- to confirm that the learning outcomes associated with parts of the course of study have already been achieved and
- that the student can be exempted from those credits.

Specific credit can only be established against the requirements of a named, specific course. It is relevant to exemption and advanced standing within a course and to admissions decisions at the start of a course where there is a requirement of appropriate discipline-based prior learning.

## 4. Credit Allowances

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### 4.1 Minimum Credit Allowance

The minimum number of credits that can be considered for exemption through this process is the smallest sized module within the course on which the student intends to study. This will be specified clearly when an applicant applies for RPL assessment.

### 4.2 Maximum credit allowances

Claim limits have been set for the number of credits from prior learning that can be allowed against each qualification at Teesside University. The maximum amount of credit that can be claimed towards each award is set out in the table in **Appendix A**.

### 4.3 Credit already used for RPL purposes

If an applicant has attained credit for RP(C) L or RP(E)L for a previous award, the same evidence will not normally be accepted for application to a subsequent award.

## 5. Courses of Study Exempt from RPL Applications

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Where a course has been designed to create a coherent learning experience for participants such that the operation of RPL will not be appropriate, then a variance application may be made through the appropriate University Committee, requesting that RPL procedures should not apply.

## 6. Principles of Assessing RPL

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

- **Relevance:** There should be an appropriate match between the evidence and the intended study presented and the learning claimed.
- **Sufficiency:** The evidence that is submitted should demonstrate the achievement of the learning claimed and be sufficient to cover the learning

outcomes of the module(s) on the intended course of study. The evidence that is presented and the learning that is claimed must be at the appropriate level.

- **Authenticity:** The evidence should clearly relate to the applicant's own efforts and achievements.
- **Currency:** The evidence should relate to current learning. This would normally be judged as learning that has been completed within five years of the claim. Consideration may be given to learning that was completed more than five years ago but in such cases, evidence will be required that the learning has been kept up to date.

For practice/competency based modules additional requirements may need to be applied.

Mechanisms for assessing prior learning should ensure 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 module or course of study without RPL i.e. that equivalent learning outcomes have been met.

Consideration should be given to whether an applicant may be disadvantaged by not engaging with the development of learning skills that they will need to achieve learning outcomes later in the course.

Applicants should refer to the [University's RPL website](#) for details of how to apply for RPL, and for details of administration fees and module fees for RPL.

## **7. The Decision Making Process**

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Exemption for modules or part of a course of study should normally be dealt with before the applicant begins a course, but since the relevance of prior learning may only become clear to an applicant after the course has commenced, such applications may normally be made within the first four weeks of the official start date of the course and will be ratified at the next Module/Progression/Award Assessment Board. Where any decisions are pending, RPL applicants will be expected to study all parts of the course until the decision is available.

Timely decisions will be made and communicated to the candidate by the School, which will be ratified at the next available Assessment Board.

Unless required by a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB), RPCL decisions at or below Level 4 do not need to be moderated by External Examiners.

### **7.1 Decisions for Admissions**

Candidates can use RPL to apply for admission at any level of study subject to the requirements of the University's Credit Accumulation & Modular Scheme (CAMS) ([http://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/about/public\\_information/quality\\_handbook.cfm](http://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/about/public_information/quality_handbook.cfm)).

Decisions on RPL for admission to a course of study are made by the School Associate Dean (Marketing & Recruitment) or Associate Dean (International), following a recommendation from the School RPL Co-ordinator (or nominee), and should be reported in to the Student Admissions Sub-Committee [SASC] annually. Decisions on admissions must be made in advance of the applicant beginning the course.

### **7.2 Decisions for Advanced Standing**

All other decisions relating to RPL are ratified at an appropriate Assessment Board (please see **Appendix B** for a diagrammatic representation of the RPL process) or agreed via Chair's Action, following a recommendation from the School RPL Co-ordinator (or nominee).

Cases of RP(E)L involving Advanced Standing will be subject to normal assessment and feedback policies, including internal and external moderation processes.

In order to ensure consistent decision making and adherence to operational processes, the School RPL Co-ordinator will make the initial assessment and recommendation about the level and number of credits to be awarded, following consultation with School subject expert(s) (and External Examiners for RP(E)L) about the application, and the Assessment Board will be asked to ratify their decision.

All decisions, including the rationale for that decision, must be recorded by the School to which the application was made. This should include those where the student was not successful in their application.

The outcome of the Assessment Board will be recorded in the Assessment Board minutes.

If the application is unsuccessful, it will be reviewed by the School RPL Co-ordinator (or nominee), to determine a way forward. Appropriate advice will be given to the applicant.

## **8. Notification Process**

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Following both successful and unsuccessful RPL applications, the School RPL Co-ordinator (or nominee) should ensure the applicant is contacted and provisional feedback/feed-forward provided. Required timescales relating to pieces of assessed work will not normally exceed those identified in the University's Assessment and Feedback Policy, although feedback relating to applications for RP(E)L, where External Examiner involvement is required, may take longer.

Where the applicant requires further clarification of the decision, or support and appeals information, this should be provided by the School RPL Co-ordinator (or nominee).

Following approval by the Module/Progression/Award/Assessment Board all RPL decisions will be recorded on SITS and will be clearly identified on the applicant's Record of Progress/Transcripts.

## **9. Unsuccessful Applications**

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Unsuccessful applications for Admissions through RPL must be recorded and an annual report presented by each School to the Student Admissions Sub-Committee.

If an RPL application for admission with advanced standing is not successful, the applicant may be offered partial exemption on a module-by-module basis if appropriate.

Unsuccessful RPL submissions for exemptions from modules or part of a course of study may be resubmitted once prior to consideration by the Assessment Board if, in the opinion of the School RPL Co-ordinator (or nominee), there is an opportunity to provide additional information to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes.

## **10. Appeals Process**

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In order to safeguard the interests of applicants, the University has established a process for use when an applicant believes that their application has not been dealt with in accordance with the University's policies, principles and procedures. This process is inclusive of all admissions. Appeals against decisions relating to admission to a course of study should be made as detailed in the Admissions Policy.

Please see the following link: <https://www.tees.ac.uk/studentregulations>

<b>MAXIMUM CREDIT ALLOWANCES<sup>1</sup></b>	
<b>Award</b>	<b>Maximum Credit Available</b>
University Certificate in Professional Development [UCPD] or University Certificate in Continuing Education [UCCE]	normally none <sup>2</sup>
University Certificate in Advanced Professional Development [UCAPD] or University Certificate in Advanced Continuing Education [UCACE]	30 credits
Certificate of Education [CertEd]	60 credits
Certificate of Higher Education [CertHE]	60 credits
Higher National Certificate [HNC]	60 credits
Higher National Diploma [HND]	180 credits (including no more than 60 at Level 5)
Diploma of Higher Education [DipHE]	180 credits (including no more than 60 at Level 5)
Foundation Degree [Fd]	180 credits (including no more than 60 at Level 5)
Professional Graduate Certificate	see specific course document
Professional Graduate Certificate in Education <sup>3</sup>	see specific course document
Degree with Honours	300 credits (including no more than 60 at Level 6)
Postgraduate Certificate in Education [PgCE/PGCE <sup>4</sup> ]	30 credits
University Certificate in Postgraduate Professional Development [UCPPD] or University Certificate in Postgraduate Continuing Education [UCPCE]	None

<sup>1</sup> There is no obligation to transfer in up to the maxima of credits stipulated in the table.

<sup>2</sup> Normally credit claims will not be accepted towards UCPD or UCCE awards unless the credit studied forms part of a defined UCPD or UCCE award. In such cases, 10 credits may be claimed.

<sup>3</sup> Leading to a recognised teaching qualification

<sup>4</sup> Leading to a recognised teaching qualification

Award	Module
Postgraduate Certificate [PgCert]	30 credits
Postgraduate Diploma [PgDip]	60 credits
Integrated Masters	300 credits (including no more than 60 credits at level M <sup>5</sup> )
Masters Degree	120 credits
Professional Practitioner Qualification	see specific course document
Professional Doctorate	see specific course document

**NOTES:**

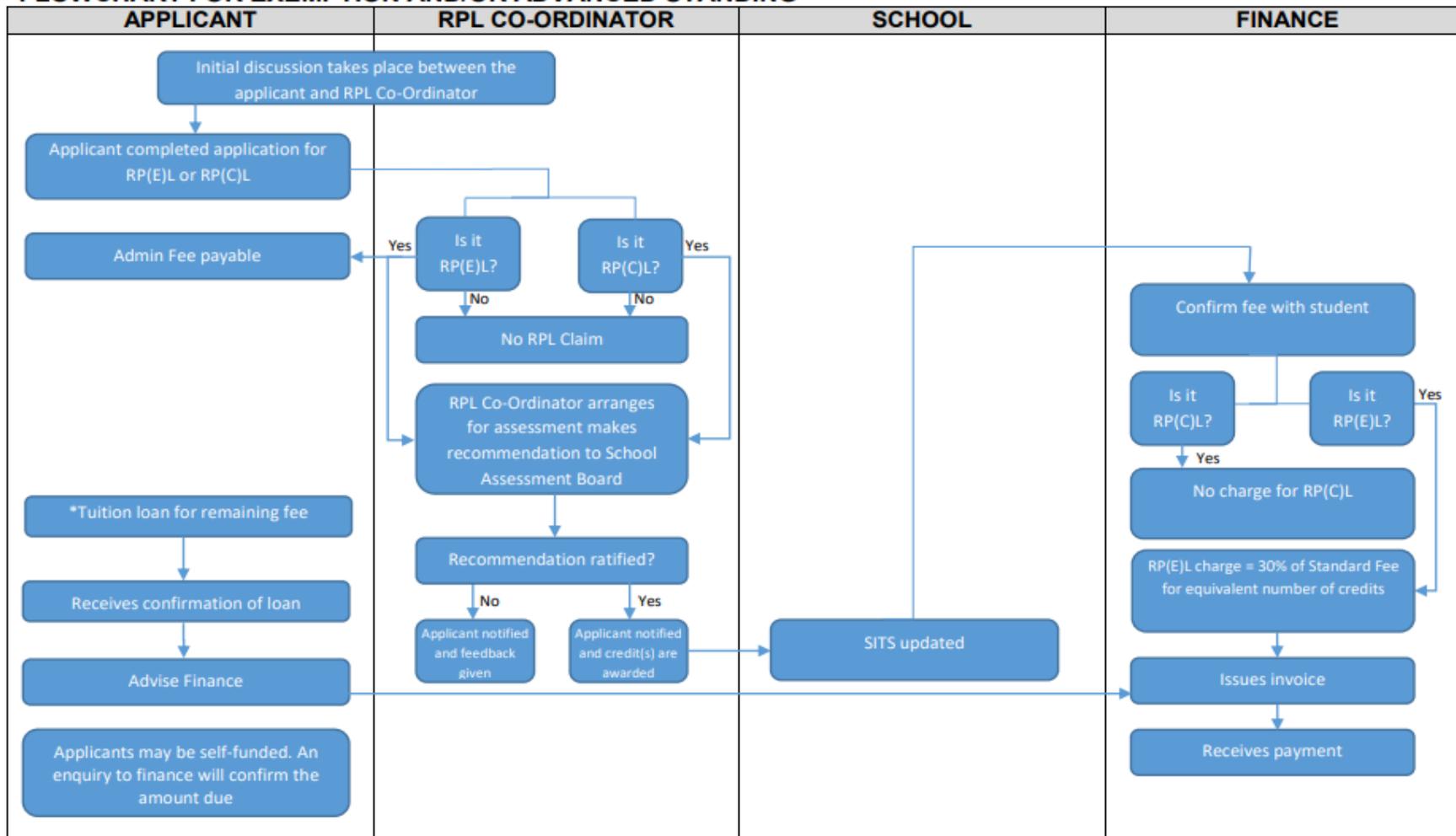
- in the case of DipHE and degree with honours awards, the maximum credit awarded for **claims based predominantly on experiential learning** would normally be **capped at 120 credits less than the total credit requirement for the award**, and credit would not normally be awarded towards the project/dissertation at the final stage/level of a degree with honours
- claims for credit which relate to HNC/D awards should be made on a unit-by-unit basis by students providing a portfolio of evidence of prior achievement of the specified learning outcomes of the HNC/D units (modules) concerned
- in the case of HND, a minimum of 60 credits at Level 5 must be achieved via study of **Teesside University** approved modules
- for claims against a whole Masters award, based predominantly on experiential learning, the maximum credit awarded would not, normally, exceed 80 credits, and credit would not normally be awarded towards the advanced independent work (project/dissertation) at the Masters stage
- RPL (C&E) requirements for Professional Doctorate awards must be clearly specified at the course approval/review event
- Students completing an accredited RPL module may be able to offset the associated credit against the credit requirement for an award following the approval of their RPL claim.

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<sup>5</sup> Except within PSRB constraints.

**FLOWCHART FOR EXEMPTION AND/OR ADVANCE STANDING - THIS NEEDS UPDATING WITH THE SCANNED VERSION**

**FLOWCHART FOR EXEMPTION AND/OR ADVANCED STANDING**



\*If you are applying for RPL against a Masters Degree, you are not entitled to the Postgraduate loan as this is only awarded to students who are studying full 180 credit standalone Masters Degree.