



Recognition of Prior Certificated and Experiential Learning

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Table of Contents

1	Introduction.....	1
2	Terminology.....	1
3	Progression agreements	2
4	Recognition of Prior Learning limitations.....	2
5	Recognition of Prior Learning maxima.....	3
6	Decision making process	4
7	Evidence required	6
8	Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning.....	6
9	Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning.....	7
10	Monitoring and review	7
11	Version control	8

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Code is informed by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education Advice and Guidance on Assessment published by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in November 2018.
- 1.2 The following sets out the University's expectations relating to the recognition of prior learning (RPL), both certificated (via an academic transcript or equivalent - RPCL) and experiential (via a portfolio of evidence - RPEL) and provides guidance to staff responsible for making decisions in individual cases. The document must be read in conjunction with the University Programme Regulations applicable to the award.
- 1.3 Where the term 'student' is used, this includes apprentices, trainees and any other learner.

A Authority

- 1.4 Education Committee is the final arbiter of the interpretation and application of this code of practice.

B Application to collaborative provision

- 1.5 The University defines 'collaborative provision' as provision delivered in whole, or in part, by the staff of a partner organisation (whether FE institution or other, whether publicly funded or not, whether UK-based or TNE) irrespective of the location or mode of delivery and leading to credit or an award of the University of Hull.
- 1.6 Partners must have in place procedures for determining applications for RPL equivalent to those set out in this Code, and which reflect the University's minimum expectations as to the amount of learning which may be attributed towards a given award of the University.
- 1.7 Where the partner has been granted admissions devolution by the University the partner is authorised to make the final decision for RPL applications relating to any programme which the partner has University approval to deliver. Where devolution has not been granted the relevant University academic unit must make the final decision. In instances where the same programme is delivered by multiple partners there must be one locus of decision-making for RPL claims regardless of the number of partners delivering that programme.

2 Terminology

- 2.1 The University recognises RPL in two situations:
 - a. recognition of prior learning that will permit entry only at the beginning of a programme - referred to as 'matriculation' or 'general credit'.
 - b. recognition of prior learning that permits entry to a programme at a later stage or with exemption from some aspects of the programme on the basis that the RPL demonstrates achievement of some of the intended learning outcomes/competencies of the programme (taking into account content and level) - referred to as 'specific credit'. Specific credit is also referred to as 'classifiable credit' where it contributes to the final classification of an Honours degree. Only credit earned on modules/programmes leading to credit or an award of the University of Hull is classifiable. This code deals with specific credit.

- 2.2 The scope of admissions regulations notwithstanding this Code of Practice refers solely to the form of RPL referred to in 2.1b.
- 2.3 Recognition of prior learning is based on the identification and acknowledgement of equivalence between an applicant's prior learning and the provision offered at the University of Hull. The University notes the following as appropriate for recognition of prior learning:
- a. Credits awarded by the University of Hull through a programme leading to a University of Hull award or individual University modules (whether delivered by university staff or staff of a partner).
 - b. Credits or previous learning awarded by a recognised UK or overseas higher education institution.
 - c. Other certificated learning (e.g., from a professional body).
 - d. Experiential (non-certificated) learning.

3 Progression agreements

- 3.1 This code applies to the consideration of applications for RPL by individuals - whether applicants to the University, or current students. It does not apply to applicants seeking RPL through a 'progression agreement' between the University and another body - whether UK-based or based overseas, although the principles applied to progression agreements are comparable to those for individual RPL applications. A progression agreement is valid only if it has been approved in accordance with the relevant code of practice. Opportunities for progression agreements must be discussed with the Quality Support Service and/or the Global Student Recruitment Team at the earliest opportunity. The University's approved progression agreements are published in the University's Register of Collaborative Provision.

4 Recognition of Prior Learning limitations

- 4.1 University Programme Regulations define the limitations which the University deems appropriate for consideration of RPL applications. These limitations apply to all University of Hull awards irrespective of whether the provision leading to the award is delivered by the University or collaboratively by a partner.
- 4.2 Where an award is regulated by a Professional Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) and/or underpins an apprenticeship, RPL must be considered in accordance with the relevant PSRB and/or Education Skills and Funding Agency regulations, where additional limitations may apply.

A Whole modules

- 4.3 Recognition of prior learning must only be granted in respect of whole modules.

B Reuse of Credit

- 4.4 credit which has previously been used - or 'cashed in' - as part of an award (whether awarded by the University of Hull or another degree awarding body) must not be used towards a further award unless the first award forms a recognised stage of the second award. For example, credits comprising a Certificate in HE (level 4) may not be used towards a second Certificate but may be used towards a Diploma or Honours degree. A Foundation Degree can be used to permit entry to the Honours stage of an Honours degree.

5 Recognition of Prior Learning maxima

- 5.1 The University limits the amount of an award which may be achieved through RPL and requires that candidates must at least complete the final stage of the award sought (with limited exceptions). The following maxima apply:

Award	Credits for award	RPL Permitted	Final stage
University Certificates & Diplomas ('minor awards')	60	0	(single stage)
Certificates in HE	120	60	(single stage)
Diploma in HE	240	120	Diploma stage
Foundation Degree	240	180 [†]	Final 60 credits of Intermediate stage
Honours degree	360/480	240/360 [†]	Honours stage
PG Certificate/Graduate Certificate	60	0	(single stage)
PG Diploma/Graduate Diploma	120	60 [†]	Diploma
PGT Masters	180	120 [†]	Masters
Research Masters	180	90	Masters
MRes	180	60	Thesis
Professional Doctorate	80-180 (+ thesis)	60 [†]	Thesis

[†] Subject to PSRB requirements

- 5.2 University regulations provide that for Honours degrees, taught masters degrees, and research masters degrees, degree classification must be based on credit awarded only by the University (defined as including credit awarded through a programme delivered by a partner but leading to a University of Hull award).
- 5.3 RPL must not be granted towards an award in the same subject where the applicant has failed the programme of study leading to the award through which the prior learning was achieved. For example, an applicant who achieves 160 credits but fails the Diploma stage of their degree must not be granted RPL for those 160 credits towards the same degree (or a Diploma or Ordinary degree). If the student had withdrawn at this stage (before submitting all of their assessments and before the meeting of the Board of Examiners) the credits may be considered for recognition of prior learning toward that same programme of study at a later date.
- The University has a rule that the life of credits is 9 years although the Admissions Tutor may, at their discretion, reject an RPL application if the experience or study used in the RPL application is less than 9 years old but judged to be insufficiently current to enable the student to undertake, or re-start, their desired programme.
 - RPL must not be a substitute for, or undermine, the decisions of Boards of Examiners. Checks should be made on SIS or on previous minutes of Boards of Examiners to ensure this is upheld in an instance where a student withdraws from, and returns to, the same programme.
- 5.4 RPL can only be granted for modules for which credits have been awarded.

6 Decision making process

A Decision making authority

- 6.1 The decision whether to recognise prior learning is a matter of academic judgement to be made within university regulations and the requirements of this code of practice. The award of University of Hull credit is delegated to faculty deans by Senate for the purposes of practical implementation of RPL. For research degrees and Doctoral College PGTS modules, the Research Degrees Committee is responsible for determining applications.
- 6.2 Deans are responsible for identifying staff who will make decisions in individual cases. Each decision must be considered by no fewer than two members of staff, one of whom should be the academic unit, Admissions Tutor. Both should have received such staff development as deemed appropriate by the dean and the Head of Admissions and Applicant Services. Particular attention should be paid to the complexity of advising on, and evaluating, applications for RPEL. Academic units may wish to establish an RPL Board or equivalent to make decisions.
- 6.3 Where an application is for entry to a programme that is subject to PSRB requirements, a decision on the application must be approved by a member of staff who has specialist knowledge of the PSRB requirements.
- 6.4 Deans should inform the Head of Admissions and Applicant Services of staff responsible for RPL decisions within the faculty.
- 6.5 For programmes involving more than one academic unit, the relevant dean (or deans) must agree the allocation of responsibilities so that it is clear to both staff and applicants how applications will be processed and who has authority to decide.

B Applications for RPL

- 6.6 Applications, whether by applicants to the University or current students, must be made to the academic unit(s) responsible for the programme of study to which the RPL application relates. An application should be acknowledged in writing within three working days and include guidance to the applicant on how long the academic unit expects to take to determine the application. Applications for research degrees and Doctoral College PGTS modules must be made to the Doctoral College.
- 6.7 Applications for RPL can be made retrospectively by current students although applications cannot be made after a student has already taken the first piece of summative assessment in the module(s) from which they wish to be exempted by RPL. Consideration of the merits of a retrospective application should include taking into account the applicant's attendance and submission record on the programme of study to date.
- 6.8 For applicants to the University to whom the UCAS system applies—any applicant for a full-time degree programme for September start (other than Nursing)—the RPL application must be submitted directly to the relevant academic unit for consideration alongside the UCAS application. Any applications for RPL received directly by the University Admissions and Applicant Services must be forwarded to the relevant academic unit.
- 6.9 Academic units must determine whether there are periods of the year during which they will not accept applications for RPL. Where this is the case, the academic unit must inform the University Admissions and Applicant Services.

- 6.10 Where an application is rejected, the applicant must be informed of the reasons for rejection and should be provided with guidance on alternative options.

C Communication of decisions

- 6.11 Where an academic unit is satisfied that it is able to make a decision on an application for RPL, the academic unit must inform the University Admissions and Applicant Services of the decision regarding undergraduate and taught postgraduate cases or the Doctoral College regarding research degree/PGTS cases) using Annexe 1^{1,2} of this code. The Admissions and Applicant Services/Doctoral College is responsible for informing the applicant in writing of the decision - whether acceptance or rejection. Academic units must not formally communicate the decision to the applicant. All decisions must be notified to Academic Services.
- 6.12 Only credit earned on a University of Hull award is classifiable. Where a decision to accept an application involves recognition of classifiable credit, the academic unit must attach a copy of the applicant's official transcript recording the marks awarded for the modules relevant to degree classification. The original mark awarded for classifiable credit must be used in determining the applicant's degree classification.

D Complaints and appeals

- 6.13 An applicant who wishes to challenge a decision relating to their RPL application must do so using the Complaints Procedure for Student Admissions.³
- 6.14 A registered student who wishes to challenge a decision relating to their RPL application must do so by lodging an appeal to the Secretary of the Student Cases Committee (taught provision) or Research Degrees Committee (research provision) within 10 working days of being notified in writing of the decision. The appeal will be considered in accordance with the University Code of Practice for Academic Appeals.

E Registration

- 6.15 Academic Services must be informed, through the standard registration process, of students joining the university as a result of an RPL application. The academic unit must enter the information on the student record system detailing the applicant's module exemptions, and the module mark for accredited modules if the credit has been awarded by the University of Hull and is classifiable (see 2 above).

F Fraudulent applications

- 6.16 Fraudulent statements made as part of an RPL application are considered to have been committed where a person or persons have purposefully misled another person or persons. Fraudulent statements can be regarding qualification or experience, providing a forged or fake certificate or transcript, a reference or other evidence to support an application, or deliberately omitting relevant information such as information relating to previous qualifications, or committing some other act of deception.
- 6.17 Where a fraudulent statement is suspected, it will be investigated and determined following the procedure in the General Policy for Student Admissions.³

¹ Additional information may be appended to annexe 1 in consideration of an RPL claim as deemed necessary by those judging the application but sections of annexe 1 may not be removed.

² The Faculty of Health Sciences may continue to use its own variant of annexe 1 on these grounds.

³ <https://www.hull.ac.uk/policies-and-information>

7 Evidence required

- 7.1 In order to recognise prior learning, the academic unit must assure itself that the learning derived from the prior certificated study and/or experience is equivalent to that of the learning that might have been achieved by following the exempted element(s) of the programme of study to which the applicant seeks admission. What constitutes equivalence is a matter of academic judgement.
- 7.2 Applicants are responsible for providing the academic unit with all relevant evidence to support the application for RPL, whether certificated or experiential.
- 7.3 Evidence must accord with the following principles:
- a. **Acceptability:** there must be an appropriate match (in terms of breadth and depth of content) between the evidenced learning and the modules against which credit is being claimed. This is a matter of academic judgement.
 - b. **Sufficiency:** the credit achieved through RPCL, or the extent of experiential learning, must be sufficient to support the volume of credit claimed at the correct level. All learning associated with the module applied for must be demonstrated in the application. This is a matter of academic judgement.
 - c. **Authenticated:** through objective evidence from a source other than the applicant - such as an official transcript or programme specification
 - d. **Currency⁴:** the prior learning must be no greater than nine years old, and within that timescale, sufficiently contemporaneous to be still relevant to the subject.

8 Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning

- 8.1 In determining an application for RPCL, the academic unit should consider the official transcript (or equivalent) produced by the HEI or other issuing body which awarded the credit. There may be instances where the applicant has not yet completed modules to be reported on a transcript, (i.e., the applicant has completed one or more certificated modules but has not completed the certificated stage). In these cases, academic references from the previous university will be the main form of evidence, and any offer would be conditional.
- 8.2 In addition, the academic unit should consider:
- a. An academic reference from an appropriate person at the relevant HEI.
 - b. Relevant programme and module specifications/handbooks, including, where necessary, the mapping of specific learning. (Academic units must provide appropriate support to applicants to conduct the mapping of prior learning to the programme of study in question. Annexe 1 should be used for this purpose).
 - c. Regulations or policies explaining the allocation of credit and grading scheme of the relevant HEI (this may be provided as part of the official transcript).
- 8.3 An applicant may have completed a module in the subject specialist area within the discipline, but the academic unit may not offer that subject specialism. Where appropriate, this learning may be accredited/recognised for prior learning if the applicant can demonstrate that the learning achieved on the module meets the relevant

⁴ The University limit is an upper threshold, and it is permissible for professional body requirements to override this.

programme competencies on the programme applied for.

9 Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning

- 9.1 Decisions must be based on a portfolio of evidence which reflects the principles set out in 7.3. Prior to an application being submitted informal discussion should take place between the academic unit and the applicant to clarify the range and type of evidence likely to be available and its potential appropriateness bearing in mind that collating such evidence, and evaluating it, is likely to be time consuming both for the applicant and for the academic unit. During such informal discussion the academic unit should ensure that the applicant is provided with the relevant module specifications.
- 9.2 In evaluating evidence of RPEL particular attention should be paid to:
- a. Identifying relevant experience and the learning achieved from that experience.
 - b. Assessing the comparability of learning to the University module, taking into account module content and level.
 - c. Ensuring that if recognition of prior learning is granted it is likely that the applicant will be able to cope with the demands of the programme.

10 Monitoring and review

- 10.1 Academic units are responsible for monitoring applications for, and decisions relating to, RPL including tracking the performance of candidates admitted with RPL.
- 10.2 Faculties are responsible for providing an overview of the operation of RPL procedures through the Continual Monitoring, Evaluation and Enhancement (CMEE) process.
- 10.3 Partners are responsible for providing an overview of RPL procedures in the Annual Monitoring, Review and Enhancement of Programmes process (AMREP).

11 Version control

Version	Author	Date approved	Relevant sections
3-01	Quality Manger		Updates to reflect new committee structure