



Policy and Regulations for the Recognition of Prior Learning

including the Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL) and
the Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)

2022-23

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Technical updates of this document are undertaken on an annual basis to reflect changes to the University's organisational and management structures and to incorporate earlier, approved amendments to related policies, procedures and regulations

This document relates to the current year. If you become aware of any previous versions that are available on line please notify SEO@bolton.ac.uk so that action can be taken to remove the document(s).

1. Purpose of this RPL Policy

RPL - the Recognition of Prior Learning (previously known as Accreditation of Prior Learning) is a process through which students may receive credit towards part of their chosen programme of study based on recognition, identification and acknowledgement of learning from previous experience and achievements. This RPL policy takes the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (UKQC) into account, in particular Chapters B2: Admissions and B6: Assessment of Students and Recognition of Prior Learning. There are two RPL pathways through which credit can be awarded:

- **Recognition of Prior 'Certificated' Learning (RPCL)** is the achievement of learning that has been formally assessed and certificated from previous study with a higher education organisation.
- **Recognition of Prior 'Experiential' Learning (RPEL)** is the non-certified acquisition of relevant skills and knowledge, gained through relevant experience, which can be evaluated.

The purpose of this policy is to allow flexibility for current and prospective students to use RPL procedures to their best effect while at the same time providing an overall framework within which regulatory and quality assurance issues are addressed across the University.

Glossary of terms

Throughout this document the following terms will be used as defined below.

Advanced entry

Where the amount of credit an applicant is awarded via **RPL** allows the applicant to gain exemption from one or more **modules**, but not a whole level or stage of study, within a programme.

Advanced standing

Where the amount of credit an applicant is awarded via RPL allows the applicant to gain exemption from at least one whole level or stage of study within a programme.

Assessment criteria

Assessment criteria describe what the learner has to do to show that the **learning outcome** has been achieved. They are based on the intended learning outcomes for the module and assessment tasks being assessed and specify the standards that must be met and the evidence that will be gathered to demonstrate the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Credit accumulation

Achieving academic credit over time by successful completion of units of study or by recognition of prior learning.

Credit level

Credit is expressed in terms of an academic level of study, which relates to the relative demand, complexity, depth of learning and learner autonomy required in order to achieve the learning outcomes of a module or level within a programme. Academic level is benchmarked to the *UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards, The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies, October 2014*.

Credit transfer

A mechanism which allows credit awarded by another HE provider to be recognised,

Notional hours of learning

Credit for previous certificated study awarded by a recognised body are equivalent to those awarded for study at the University.

It should be noted that, depending upon the subject area, the learning claimed for will need to have been undertaken within a reasonable timeframe to ensure that knowledge and techniques acquired remain current and appropriate for the programme of study applied for (see 10.1, below).

Examples :

A student who has successfully completed a Higher National Certificate (HNC) applies to a Bachelors degree in the same subject at the University. Following assessment, it is agreed that they will not have to take the first year (Level 4) of the programme as their HNC meets the learning outcomes for that level of study on that programme. Note that if the learning outcomes had not matched, the student might not have been able to obtain credit for the entire first year, despite having a qualification worth the same volume of credit as the first year of the undergraduate degree programme.

A student who had previously completed a Bachelors degree could not use that Bachelors degree to obtain another qualification of the same type, subject matter and level at another or the same institution. So a business degree from institution X would not entitle a student to use RPL to obtain another business qualification at the same level at institution Y.

4.3 The Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)

RPEL involves an assessment process that leads to recognition, normally through the award of credit. As stated in the UKQC Chapter B6,

The essential feature of (RPEL) is that it is the learning gained through

6. Process for Making a Claim for RPL

(a) The Criteria

In order to gain credit via RPEL, the claimant's learning will need to meet the following criteria:

x learning must be clearly differentiated from experience. (It is the claimant's knowledge, capacity for reflection, understanding and skills which are assessed for credit, not the experience in itself);

x learning must be at a level appropriate to the a programme offered by the University;

x knowledge and understanding and skills acquired through experience may have occurred at an(t)- ai(ng an.7ay)6..2 -0.8 (/LBoda)-10.)-72 (t)-72 0 8t(aid[t]-D0085j/TT1 1 Tff

experiences. The portfolio includes claims to that learning, with supporting evidence, which allows the claims can be assessed.

Each portfolio will be an individualised statement of experiential learning and although there are no specific models or criteria, successful claims will include portfolios that contain both direct and indirect evidence:

(a) direct evidence may include project reports, databases, case study notes, correspondence, conference papers, work plans.

(b) indirect evidence may include statements from employers, customers or clients; documentation on courses undertaken; appraisals, references; letters of validation from people who are in a position to judge the value and quality of the learning.

Step 5: the assessment of claims for RPEL

The recognition of prior experiential learning involves an assessment process on the part of the University's academic staff that leads to recognition. The RPEL claim is assessed by an RPL Panel (as outlined by in Annex A and the Assessment Board regulations) organised at School/Division level and ratified by the relevant Assessment Board.

Checks are made to evaluate each item of evidence to ensure that the learning is appropriate to the learning objectives of the academic award being sought.

Normally an assessment interview will be held to test claims to learning. Assessors might ask the claimant to undertake an assessment exercise to substantiate aspects of the learning claims. These exercises could be written assignments, demonstration

claim as they would through engaging with the us

Figure 1. Normal limits on RPL Credit for intended awards (note that this table does not apply to exit qualifications)

Award type	Number of credit points for award	Total amount of RPL credit permitted
Undergraduate Level Award		
Graduate Diploma	120	80
Honours Degree	360	240
Foundation Degree / Dip HE	240	120
Postgraduate Level Award		
Master's Degree	180	90
Postgraduate Diploma	120	60
Postgraduate Certificate	60	30
Professional Doctorate	540	220
Integrated Masters	240	240

11. Marks Awarded for RPL and Impact on Degree Classifications

12. Fees for RPL Claims

Fees may be charged for an RPL claim depending on the circumstances in which the claim is being made.

12.1 Fees **will not normally** be charged for:

- x All applications for RPCL;
- x RPEL claims used purely for admissions purposes (but not for advanced standing). Charging a fee for RPEL in this circumstance could be regarded as providing a barrier to entry and therefore against the principles of widening participation.

12.2 Fees **will be** charged in the case of applications involving RPEL that are intended to result in the award of credit against one or more modules and that apply to:

- x **Part-time** and **full-time undergraduate** students;
- x **Part-time** and **full-**

- Issues of academic standards vis-à-vis RPL;
- School-level summaries of RPL;
- Other Institution-wide issues arising from or related to the *Policy and Regulations for the Recognition of Prior Learning*.

ANNEX A: MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE OF RPL PANELS

Membership:

Head of School (or their nominee) (Chair)
Two senior academics from the School

POLICY AND REGULATIONS FOR THE RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

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