

Policy Coversheet

Name of Policy:	Recognition of Prior Learning Scheme
Purpose of Policy:	To inform students staff and applicants about the provisions for the application of recognition of prior learning.
Intended audience(s):	All students registered on Staffordshire University awards, staff and applicants
Approval for this policy given by:	Academic Board
Last Review Date:	01/07/2017
Review Due Date: (3 years from last review)	01/07/2019
Individual responsible for review:	Registrar
Authorising department:	Student and Academic Services



Recognition of Prior Learning Scheme

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1. Background

Staffordshire University has long been committed to excelling in support for learning and teaching and to widening participation in higher education.

The Recognition of Prior Learning Scheme (RPLS) seeks to recognise and value prior learning and help students find their level and make the best use of their learning experiences. It provides a framework to bring together all RPL provision and ensure equity of treatment across subject disciplines.

The RPL Scheme is designed to encourage achievers to participate in higher education by enabling them to utilise prior knowledge and skills appropriately against the Learning Outcomes of their chosen programme.

2. Principles

The RPLS enables an individual, or group of students to incorporate previous relevant theoretical and/or practical learning into a programme of study and be accredited for this learning. Accreditation is a means of considering all relevant formal certificated learning and experiential learning for credit towards a named award. Units of learning, theoretical or practical that are accepted for accreditation must be of compatible value to the programme content and academic level. The smallest unit of accreditation or recognition will be a module. RPL applications cannot be made retrospectively in the event that a module has been taken and failed.

The methods and processes of acquisition of knowledge and skills may be different but the learning outcomes must be seen as substantially equivalent to those identified in the approved award. This equivalence can be claimed against a level of study using the level learning outcomes and/or individual module(s) using module learning outcomes and applies to both specific and general credit. The RPLS will only accredit prior learning where the University award is of an equal or higher level than that previously studied.

When Faculties review the evidence they must satisfy the following criteria:

Validity – evidence must be provided that the prior learning for which the applicant is claiming credit is relevant to the programme they have applied for at Staffordshire University. The applicant must demonstrate that there is an appropriate match in both level and content between the previous studies and the Staffordshire University module or modules for which they are seeking accreditation.

Currency – prior learning must have been gained sufficiently recent to make it still of value. The RPL Scheme will recognise formal certificated or experiential learning which has occurred up to five years prior to the start date of the course. Articulation and Advance Standing Agreements will be reviewed periodically and when there are significant changes to either institution's courses.

Sufficiency – applicants must provide enough evidence to fully demonstrate they have achieved the credit currently being claimed.

Authenticity – evidence must be provided that relates to the applicants own efforts and should be able to be verified as such.

It is the applicant's responsibility to gather evidence for any claim.

A maximum of 30 credits from a completed award can be used to count towards a qualification at the same level. So a student with a BSc can only reuse a maximum of 30 credits from that award towards another BSc and a student with a Masters can only reuse a maximum of 30 credits from that award towards another Masters qualification.

However, a student may seek to use credits previously gained in order to contribute to a higher level award or to an award that is larger in terms of the number of credits. For example:

- A student with a Certificate of Higher Education could use the credits from that award towards a honours degree (if appropriate);
- A student with a Postgraduate Certificate could use the credits from that award towards a Postgraduate Diploma or Masters (if appropriate).

Prior learning can only be used for accreditation purposes once. Students who have been accredited for specific prior learning at Staffordshire University or another institution cannot apply for accreditation of this specific learning again.

No student should be disadvantaged whether through progression opportunities or award classification through following a Recognition of Prior Learning route. Some University courses are accredited by professional bodies and in some instances this may prevent the University from accrediting prior learning.

3. Types of Recognised Prior Learning

Admission to the first year without any module exemptions of a higher education course is not considered within RPL as this is considered in recruitment and admissions policies and covered by the QAA Quality Code chapter B2¹.

There are a number of instances where either individual applicants claim for RPL, or the University uses RPL for a group of applicants for example:

- An individual applicant² may claim for RPL before they enrol on their course.
- A group of applicants, for example from a corporate client, may apply for accreditation of their learning.
- The University may formalise accreditation of a qualification from an external body (such as Edexcel).
- The University may accredit prior study or qualification on a particular course from another educational institution³

These **pre- course enrolment** RPL claims are dealt with by admissions or course tutors/ leaders using the principles above.

¹ QAA (2013) UK Quality Code for HE 'Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education' Gloucester: QAA

² QAA (2013) UK Quality Code for HE 'Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and Recognition of Prior Learning' Gloucester: QAA

³ QAA (2013) UK Quality Code for HE 'Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others' Gloucester: QAA

A student may, once commenced their studies, decide that they have a case to be accredited for a module(s) on their course. These **post- course enrolment** RPL claims are dealt with by the course leader, again, using the principles above.

Terms:

Credit Transfer is the mechanism whereby individual students who have successfully completed a level, stage or module(s) in an HE course at another institution may apply to transfer that credit to an appropriate course at the university.

Advanced Standing is the process by which students are advanced on a course through APCL or APEL.

Articulation is the process by which the University makes the judgement whether students from another institution are admitted to a course with advanced standing.

Articulation Agreements are the means by which cohorts of students on a particular course and institution, who satisfy academic criteria, are automatically entitled to be admitted with advanced standing to a specified course at Staffordshire University. Articulation Agreements are formally approved via an agreement between the University and the institution or approved as a progression agreement at a course approval event.

Advanced Standing Agreements are the means by which Staffordshire University agree by prior arrangement that students who are either on a particular course and institution (who satisfy academic criteria), or have passed a qualification from a particular awarding body, or have been accredited with specific learning, may apply to transfer an agreed stage of a particular programme of study and/or be accredited with certain modules (subject to general admissions considerations, for example, visas and English language requirements). Advanced Standing Agreements are formally approved by Staffordshire University.

Accreditation of prior certificated learning (APCL) is the means by which previously assessed and certificated learning is considered and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes. This learning may or may not be credit-bearing.

Accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) is the means by which learning achieved outside education or training systems is assessed and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes. Credit is awarded not on the experience itself but on what the student has learned from that experience. Therefore there has to be submission of an assessment of this learning reflecting the learning outcomes of the level/module(s) claimed for accreditation.

4. Scope

Normally a maximum of 50% of credits for any award may be set against the Recognition of Prior Learning Scheme. Exceptions have to be approved by the relevant School who will in turn forward minutes covering these approvals to the University Quality Committee. The scope of RPL is subject to the specific requirements of the approved course, any professional, regulatory and statutory bodies and the discretion of the relevant School.

The maximum volume of RPL is indicated in the table below with examples of approved exceptions to the usual 50% maximum. This is for guidance only and does not constitute an entitlement. Applicants would be required to claim for RPL unless covered by Advanced Standing or Articulation Agreements.

Maximum Volume of RPL on Staffordshire University Courses

Award	Credit Required for Award	Max credit via RPL	Minimum Credits to be taken on Staffordshire University approved course
Grad Dip	120	60	60 credits at Level 6 or above
Grad Cert	60	30	30 credits at Level 6 or above
Honours Degree	360	240	120 credits with at least 90 at Level 6
Ordinary Degree	300	240	60 at Level 6
FdA/FdSc	240	120	120 credits with at least 60 at Level 5
DipHE	240	120	120 credits with at least 60 at Level 5
HND	240	120	120 credits including at least 60 at Level 5
HNC	120	60	60 credits at Level 4 or above
CertHE	120	60	60 credits at Level 4 or above
MEng MSci	480	320	160 credits with at least 90 credits at level 7
Masters	180	120	60 credits at Level 7 (including the Dissertation)
PgDip	120	60	60 credits at Level 7
PgCert	60	30	30 credits at Level 7
Credit bearing doctoral awards (e.g. DBA, EdD, DClinPsy)	540	180	360 credits at level 8

5. Processes

Chapter B6 'Assessment of students and the recognition of prior learning' of the QAA UK Quality Code states that 'judgements of student performance are based on the extent to which the student is able to demonstrate achievement of the corresponding intended learning outcomes'⁴ Academic judgement is at the core of these decisions.

Each RPL decision is arrived at on a **course by course basis by mapping** either the stage, or level, or module learning outcomes (according to the type of application). Mappings for group RPL will be documented in the associated advanced standing or articulation agreements and individual RPL will be recorded on the notes pages of the student information system (SITS) by the relevant member of staff (usually course or admissions tutor).

All applications for RPL should be made **as early as possible** – before a module commences is preferable. If the module has already commenced, the module/course leader will need to advise the student that applications can be rejected and therefore there may be a need to continue with module attendance/learning while the application is being processed. All RPL claims must be made in the English Language and where necessary the student will need to provide translations of evidence for the claim. If the decision is that the learning (certificated or experiential) has not met the learning outcomes the student should continue to study the module and undertake the full assessment in the usual way.

For students who have progressed to an Honours degree from another award of this University (e.g. Foundation Degree, HNC or HND) credit awarded will carry the marks achieved and these will be included in the calculation of the Honours degree. For all other instances, credit awarded through the RPLS will be ungraded and will be recorded as the pass mark of 40%E for undergraduates (50%E for postgraduates) on the students' profile. This mark will not be taken into account when calculated the average mark for classification purposes.⁵

Advanced Standing and Articulation Agreements

Applications for Advanced Standing and Articulation from other educational institutions will be considered by the School, usually at the School Quality Committee. A list of Articulation/Advanced Standing agreements will be held within the relevant School. Students who apply to the University under these arrangements are not required to complete an individual APL application.

Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL)

Students applying for APCL should provide copies (sight of originals may be requested for verification) of the certificated learning to the admissions/ course leader. This School will then check that the learning outcomes from the certificated prior learning align with the learning outcomes of the module/level/stage of the Staffordshire University course. This may be via a School committee or designated individuals.

⁴ QAA (2013) UK Quality Code for HE Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality. Chapter B6 'Assessment of students and recognition of prior learning'. Gloucester: QAA (page 3).

⁵ Staffordshire University Academic Award Regulations

Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)

Students applying APEL should discuss with the admissions tutor or course leader the specific evidence of the claim and submit an assessment determined by the admissions tutor/ course leader. This may be in the form of a portfolio. The assessment brief will be submitted for approval through the usual School processes. A form should be completed (in appendix) for the application and assessment. A clear indication should be made at the front of the submission indicating the mapping of the learning outcomes of the claimed module(s)/ level to the evidence of experiential learning submitted. These will be assessed by the course / module leader as pass/fail (ungraded) and if passed will be recorded as the pass mark of 40%E (50%E postgraduate) on the students' profile. This mark will not be taken into account when calculated the average mark for classification purposes. The submitted assessments will be subject to the usual School moderation and external examining processes.

These assessments will be retained by the relevant School and made available to the relevant award or module external examiner.

In some cases, where the course is subject to specific professional, regulatory and statutory bodies there may be a further School based approval for any claims of RPL.

There is usually no cost to the student for Advanced Standing, Credit Transfer, Articulation and Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL). However where there is extensive scrutiny of non-standard certificated evidence there may be a fee charged.

Due to the assessment element of Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) there is a charge of 40% of the module fee.

6. Appeals

In accordance with the University's student appeals regulations, an appeal can only be made against an RPL decision on the basis that there was a material error or irregularity in the process.

The process for appealing against an RPL decision will be as per the 'Procedure for a student to appeal against the decision of an Assessment/Award Board' available on the University Web Site.

Equality issues have been taken into account during the development of this policy and all protected characteristics have been considered as part of the Equality Analysis undertaken.

APPENDIX – APEL ASSESSMENT FORM

COURSE		
NAME		
STUDENT NUMBER (IF APPLICABLE)		
LEVEL/ MODULE(S) CLAIMED FOR APEL	ASSESSMENT	
	PASS	FAIL
<p>ASSESSMENT BRIEF COVERING THE LEARNING OUTCOMES OF THE LEVEL/MODULE(S): TO BE WRITTEN BY THE COURSE LEADER/ NOMINEE AND APPROVED BY THE RELEVANT SCHOOL</p>		
<p>DATE ASSESSMENT DUE:</p>		
<p>DOES THE ASSESSMENT SUBMITTED MEET THE LEARNING OUTCOMES OF THE LEVEL/ MODULES CLAIMED? COURSE LEADER (OR NOMINEE) TO TICK APPROPRIATE BOXES ABOVE AND SIGN BELOW:</p> <p>_____</p>		
<p>(ANY MODULE NOT PASSED IN THE ASSESSMENT WILL HAVE TO BE TAKEN IN FULL BY THE STUDENT)</p>		