



# **CODE OF PRACTICE ON ASSESSMENT**

## **APPENDIX R**

### **Policy on Recognition on Prior Learning (RPL)**

**2024-25**

#### **ANNEXE 1 STUDENT GUIDE**

Applicable to all cohorts

In the Code of Practice on Assessment and all Appendices the term “student” includes apprentices on degree apprenticeship programmes

## **Guide for Applicants**

### **A Background**

By recognising learning that has taken place in the past, RPL has two key uses. It can enable someone to:

- Gain access to a programme of study for which they do not have the prescribed entrance requirements – normally set out in terms of formal qualifications, for example, entry on to a postgraduate programme without having an undergraduate degree. In this case substantial professional experience may compensate for the lack of formal undergraduate study.
- Gain credit for part of a programme without having to repeat the learning experience. For example, you may have already gained the required knowledge through work-based activities or CPD activity.

In addition to identifying learning which has taken place in the past, the RPL process is also a valuable tool in identifying future learning needs.

The RPL process uses terminology associated with the measurement of learning and the structure of awards and qualifications. In discussing or formulating an RPL claim, it is helpful to be familiar with the following terms:

Credits are awarded for a volume of learning at particular levels. One credit represents a notional 10 hours of student learning.

The level of a module or unit of learning is an indicator of the complexity and depth of the learning required. Levels 4-6 equate to years 1-3 of a three-year undergraduate programme and level 7 equates to a Master's programme.

A programme is a structured pattern of teaching and learning leading to a full award. A programme is made up of modules or units of learning. At undergraduate level the modules can be 7.5, 15 or 30 credits. At postgraduate level modules can be 2.5, 5, 7.5, 10, 15, 20, 30, 40 or 45 credits.

Learning outcomes describe the learning which should be achieved through the study of a particular module. Universities use learning outcomes to identify whether students have demonstrated, through assessment, the minimum level of learning required to pass a module and thus gain the associated credit.

Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours are defined in the approved apprenticeship standards and must be met to demonstrate an apprentice's full occupational competence in the identified job role.

Credit transfer is the process by which credit gained from another institution can be assigned to a UoL programme. In practice this is identical to RPCL.

Specific Credit may be awarded where the prior learning matches, in terms of level, volume and content, the learning outcomes of a course or module. It therefore allows exemption from study of a module or part of a programme.

General Credit may be awarded where the prior learning is recognised to be of sufficient depth and quality as to be assigned a specific level and amount (number of credits), but which cannot be matched to the subject content of a particular module or programme. It is most likely to be used for admission to a programme.

## **B Key Features of the RPL Scheme at the University of Liverpool**

Universities vary in the ways in which they implement RPL. In considering any application to this University you should be aware of the following features of its RPL Scheme:

- Although an Adviser can provide support and advice, it is the applicant's responsibility to prepare an application and to submit adequate documentary evidence in line with required deadlines. Note that the Adviser's view upon a draft claim does not guarantee the outcome of the assessment decision.
- The maximum credit for which RPL credit can be offered is normally one third of any given programme.
- The minimum claim allowable under the University's scheme is equal to the smallest module within any given programme.
- There is no difference between RPCL and RPEL in the amount of credit that can be claimed towards an award.
- Claims for exemption should be against whole modules or units of learning of a programme. In some cases it may be possible to "top up" your prior learning to the required level and volume. Where an Adviser thinks it appropriate, specific self-directed study may be suggested to enable you to expand or deepen your knowledge in a particular area.
- RPL credit cannot be awarded for any module which comprises a major project or dissertation.

## **C The RPL Process at the University of Liverpool**

1. If you think that you have already acquired skills and knowledge which may enable you to access or gain exemption from part of a programme, you should contact the RPL Adviser in the relevant academic department. The School Office (or Institute Office in the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences) will be able to provide you with contact details.
2. The Adviser will provide guidance upon issues such as credit requirements, RPL regulations and procedures and the structure and content of a claim. Be aware that in some cases, following careful consideration, an Adviser may advise against making an RPL claim.
3. Once you have gathered the appropriate information, it is your responsibility to prepare and submit your application. This involves completion of the RPL application form and the compilation of evidence which demonstrates that the learning which has taken place matches the learning that is required.
4. In the case of RPCL, the application will focus upon programme and/or module outlines or syllabi and evidence will normally take the form of formal certificates or transcripts. Where the prior learning is experiential, the presentation often takes the form of a portfolio.
5. When considering RPEL, it is important to remember that credit can only be awarded for demonstrated learning which can be assessed. It is the *learning* that has arisen from experience that is accredited; credit cannot be awarded on the basis of experience alone.
6. You should be mindful that the award or credit transfer or RPL may impact on your registration which may in turn affect compliance with student finance and /or visa conditions.

## **D The Timing of a Claim**

1. If applying for admission to a programme, your application should normally be submitted 2 months prior to its start.
2. An RPL claim for exemption from part of a programme can only be made either once an offer of a place has been received by a prospective student or following formal registration as a student of the University.
3. Deadlines for acceptance of an offer of a place cannot be extended to accommodate the timing of RPL assessment decisions.
4. RPL credit can only be awarded in advance of the start of any module. This means that you must ensure that there is sufficient time for an assessment decision to be made before the relevant module starts.
5. The RPL Adviser can provide detailed guidance on timing issues.

## **E Evidence**

1. The application form allows you to make a precise statement of the claim for credit and to list the evidence you will provide in support of your claim. Your evidence should normally take the form of a portfolio made up of various component parts which combine to demonstrate your prior learning. It should contain:
  - a. a commentary identifying the learning gained from each experience
  - b. a list of the evidence cross referenced to each learning outcome
  - c. full evidence as appropriate
2. Appropriate sources of experiential learning may include work experience, voluntary work, short courses or other relevant activities. In building your portfolio it is important to remember that you cannot get credit just because you have done something in the past. It is the learning that arises from your experience which provides the basis for its award. It is essential therefore to include in your portfolio a substantial element of analysis and reflection which can clearly demonstrate the separation of learning from experience.
3. Normally a portfolio for RPCL should include:
  - a. Title, location and nature of the institution at which the prior learning took place
  - b. Dates of attendance at the institution where the prior learning took place and details of any qualifications obtained
  - c. A statement from the institution of the FHEQ equivalence of any qualifications obtained
  - d. Programme and/or module or course descriptions
  - e. Original copy of an authorised transcript of marks
  - f. Original formal certificates
4. A portfolio for RPEL might include:
  - a. Confirmation from an employer or other objective source of the activities and learning claimed by an RPEL applicant
  - b. reports e.g. from work-based projects
  - c. assignments from previous non-academic-credit-bearing courses
  - d. in-company projects and presentations
  - e. reflective diaries
  - f. professional or personal development portfolios compiled for professional bodies or for other awards
  - g. testimony and witness statements e.g. from an employer or client
  - h. certificates of achievement / attendance from previous non-credit-bearing courses

5. The evidence (and its associated commentary) that you present in any portfolio should have certain characteristics. It should be:
  - a. Sufficiently detailed and in enough depth for the assessor to be sure that your learning has covered all the subject matter required
  - b. At a level appropriate to the specific credit claimed. Level descriptors are available to help you with this
  - c. Authentic – you must be able to prove that the evidence is all your own work
  - d. Current - the University would normally expect your learning to have been gained within the past 5 years.
6. You should submit the originals of the evidence you have listed. Once the RPL application is completed these documents will be returned to you and so you will need to provide a means for the Adviser to do this e.g. provide a stamped addressed envelope. Please note that you must retain the originals of all APEL related documentation whilst completing your study at the University, and until graduation.

## **F Assessment**

1. The claim will be assessed by another member of academic staff (an approved RPL Assessor) who is familiar with the relevant programme of study. You may be invited for interview to provide supplementary information or to clarify issues arising from the documentary evidence which you have already provided. In this case, the Adviser will provide guidance on what the interview will cover.
2. The Adviser will notify you of the assessment decision within 4 weeks of submission of your application.
3. The assessment decision will be one of the following:
  - a. That the evidence is incomplete. You may resubmit a claim on one further occasion only. The Adviser will provide guidance as to the additional information that is required.
  - b. That the level and volume of learning achieved is sufficient for specific credit to be awarded or for admission to a programme.
  - c. That the level and volume of learning achieved is NOT appropriate for specific credit to be awarded or for admission to a programme.

## **G Appeals**

There is no right of appeal<sup>1</sup> regarding the academic decision. Appeals can only be made in the event of a perceived procedural irregularity and should be submitted in writing to the Student Conduct, Complaints and Compliance Team in Student Life ([appeals@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:appeals@liverpool.ac.uk)) within ten working days of receipt of the decision. The Student Conduct, Complaints and Compliance Team will ask the appropriate Faculty Lead for RPL to consider the appeal and a response will normally be provided to you within four weeks of submission of the appeal. There will be no further right of appeal within the University but if you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of your appeal you may request a Completion of Procedures letter from the Student Conduct, Complaints and Compliance Team to take a complaint, if eligible, to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (the OIA).

## **H Fees**

1. No fee is charged for the process of advising on and/or assessing any RPL application for admission to a programme.

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<sup>1</sup> Advice is also available from the Liverpool Guild of Students Advice Service