



# Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 University Centre Quayside recognises the value of learning wherever it occurs, either to meet programme entry requirements or to achieve credit towards specific awards. However, recognition of prior learning will only be possible where learning, or experience, appropriate to the outcomes of the relevant entry requirements, module(s) or award level, can be assured to be academically valid.

## 2. Definitions

- 2.1 The abbreviations shown in the definitions below will be used throughout this policy.

### 2.2 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

- 2.2.1 This term is used to describe the process whereby applicants of all ages and backgrounds are eligible to receive recognition and formal credit for learning or experience acquired in the past through formal study and through work and other life experiences.

- 2.3 RPL has two widely recognised forms: prior experiential (or informal) learning and prior certificated learning:

#### 2.3.1 Prior Experiential Learning (PEL)

- 2.3.1.1 Prior Experiential Learning denotes learning derived from experience which is uncertificated and not previously assessed. For example, learning from unpaid work or paid work, community activities, leisure pursuits and other informal learning experiences.

#### 2.3.2 Prior Certificated Learning (PCL)

- 2.3.2.1 Prior Certificated Learning is a process through which previously assessed and certificated learning is considered, and if appropriate, recognised for academic purposes.

## 3. Principles

- 3.1 Credit is given for learning, and not for experience alone, and where the level, standard and content are relevant to the particular course. The award of credit is a matter of consistent application of academic judgement and must result from a transparent and demonstrably rigorous and fair decision-making process.
- 3.2 Credit can only be given for whole modules
- 3.3 RPL will only be recognised against levels four and five. The level 6 year of a full 360 credit Bachelor's degree cannot be claimed as RPL.
- 3.4 Credit will not normally be given for certificated learning that has taken place more than five years previous and will be allocated according to Table 1 on the following page. Credit may not be counted twice for the same award level.
- 3.5 A student may be awarded recognition of prior learning, towards the requirements of a named award up to two-thirds\* of the total credit requirements for that award

\*two-thirds of RPL is only permitted for full, three-year bachelor's degrees (360 credits) or full Masters degrees (a minimum of 180 credits) and not sub-awards, where the usual maximum is 50%.

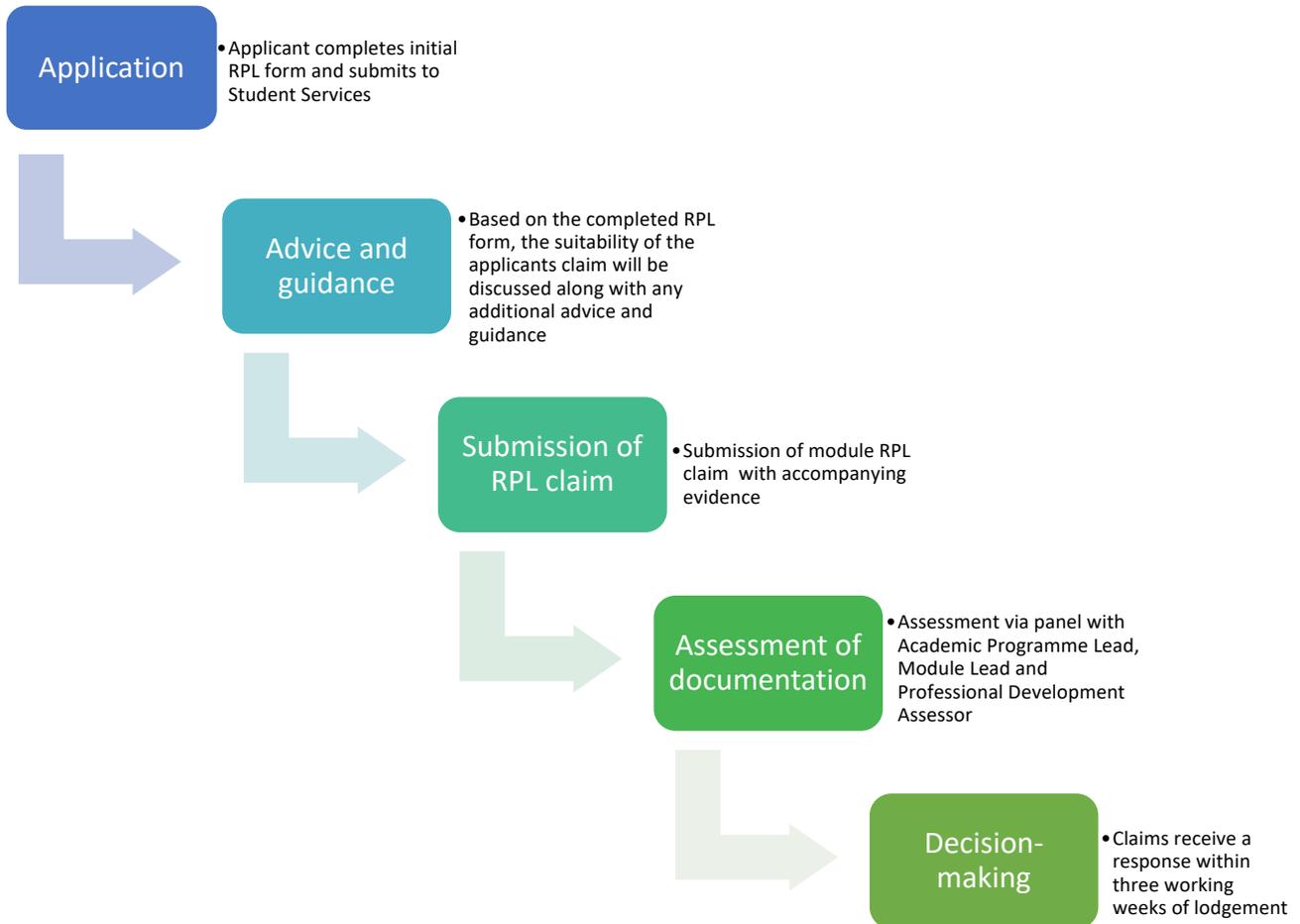
### 3.5.1 Table 1

Table 1 Award	Credit required for award	Maximum credit allowed	NQF Level
Certificate of Higher Education	120	60	4
Higher National Certificate	150	75	4/5
Diploma of Higher Education	240	120	4/5
Higher National Diploma	240	120	4/5
Foundation Degree	240	120	4/5
Degree	300	150	4/5
Degree with Honours	360	240	4/5/6
Postgraduate Certificate	60 (M)	30(M)	7
Postgraduate Diploma	120 (M)	60 (M)	7
Master's Degree	180 (M)	120 (M)	7

- 3.6 RPL that has been accredited by UCQ will be clearly identified on student's transcript.
- 3.7 All credit awarded will be relevant to identified modules or awards. Accreditation for non-specific 'free' modules is allowed, where equitable. Detailed assessment of credit whether based on certificated or experiential learning, can only be made by subject specialists since the assessment can only be made in the light of detailed subject knowledge. These specialists should ensure that the experience represents the achievement of learning outcomes comparable to those which would have been achieved had the course of study against which credit is claimed been taken. This may be assessed by any method appropriate to what is being assessed and should be verified by another specialist.
- 3.8 It is the responsibility of the student to prepare an application and submit adequate documentation. Applicants should identify in advance whether they wish to apply for admission to a course or credit.
- 3.9 The role of the *adviser*, the member of staff who advises a student on the production and submission of an RPL claim, must be separate and distinct from the role of *assessor*, the member of staff who exercises academic judgement in assessing the claim. In order to maintain the objectivity and rigour, the *assessor(s)* should be subject specialists able to evaluate the evidence offered and to establish the authenticity of the claim. All staff associated with the support, guidance and assessment of claims for the recognition of prior learning will be expected to undertake appropriate training.
- 3.10 Students should be fully informed by the *adviser* of the range of evidence that would be considered appropriate in a submission. The portfolio of academic/professional evidence presented should be appropriate to the proposed programme, sufficient in length, depth and level, authentic and recent.
- 3.11 Evidence should be included of underpinning knowledge. Where a submission of learning from experience has demonstrated learning equivalent to that of an existing course unit the credits and level allocated for the submission will be the same.

## 4. Process

4.1 The following process will apply as appropriate:



## 4.2 Application

4.2.1 Applications and information about what is required for credit should be directed to the UCQ Student Services Team.

## 4.3 Advice and Guidance

4.3.1 Applicants will be required to complete an initial claim form detailing the prior learning they wish to accredit. The nominated *advisor* will handle queries at this stage and provide support to an individual student in respect of advice and guidance concerning a claim for RPL.

## 4.4 Submission of claim

4.4.1 All applications must normally be submitted at least four working weeks before the student commences the programme of study against which credit is sought. Claims submitted late will not be considered unless there are extenuating circumstances. Please refer to the UCQ's Extenuating Circumstances Policy if this is the case.

4.4.2 Applicants will be asked to submit for assessment:

4.4.2.1 Relevant certification with full academic transcript

4.4.2.2 Signed job description

4.4.2.3 Reflective account for **each** module being claimed for:

- A reflective account outlining your roles, responsibilities and experience relating to the areas you are applying for RPL. This will include referencing theories and core reading as per the module guide. This must meet the module learning outcomes.

4.4.2.4 Witness Testimony from Line/Senior Manager

4.4.2.5 Question and answer session with UCQ Assessor (to cover areas not clearly outlined within the reflective account)

## 4.5 Assessment of documentation

4.5.1 In order to maintain objectivity and rigour, the *assessor(s)* should be subject specialists able to evaluate the evidence offered and to establish the authenticity of the claim. Staff who have acted as *advisers* may be asked for their recommendation, but the decision about the amount of credit (if any) to be awarded will be taken by an *assessor*.

4.5.2 In assessing the documentation, the *assessor* should take into account the level, standard, content, relevance and date of the prior learning.

4.5.3 Where appropriate, a second assessment of the credit awarded may be undertaken by another suitably qualified assessor.

4.5.4 *Assessors* of the documentation should objectively assess portfolio claims using the following checklist:

4.5.4.1 Validity – That the assessment does identify the knowledge and skills it purports to assess.

4.5.4.2 Reliability – That the assessment can be repeated with the same outcome.

4.5.4.3 Sufficiency – That the evidence provided is appropriate in terms of quality and quantity.

4.5.4.4 Authenticity - That it is the applicant's own experience and subsequent learning for which accreditation is being sought.

4.5.4.5 Relevance – That the learning to be accredited represents up to date knowledge and skills.

## **4.6 Decision-making**

4.6.1 Normally, claims will receive a response within three working weeks of lodging of the application. If refused, information regarding why this decision has been made will be provided to the applicant within this timeframe.

## 5. Monitoring

5.1 The assessment of learning derived from experience should be open to internal and external scrutiny and monitoring within institutional quality assurance procedures for moderation of assessment. All RPL claims should be internally moderated and a sample presented for external examination.

5.2 It is important that Departments monitor the progress of students admitted with RPL, so that information is built up on the suitability of particular qualifications or patterns of experience for the granting of advanced standing or credit exemption.