

Procedures for the Recognition of Prior Learning

Yellow highlighted text identifies the most recent revisions to the regulations. If you require these revisions to be identified in an alternative format, please contact the Secretary to Academic Board.

1. Purpose

- 1.1 Applicants to University programmes can claim academic credit for relevant previous study or learning experiences. This is known as recognition of prior learning (RPL).
- 1.2 There are three forms of recognition of prior learning:
 - a. **Credit transfer:** recognition of credit or qualifications at higher education level (4 or above) awarded by a UK higher education degree-awarding body in accordance with the relevant higher education qualifications framework;
 - b. **Recognition of prior certificated learning** (such as professional development awards or employment-based awards) which is at higher education level but which has not led to the award of credits or qualifications positioned on the relevant higher education qualifications framework;
 - c. **Recognition of prior experiential or informal learning.**
- 1.3 Applications are normally dealt with alongside the admissions process.
- 1.4 **The Taught Courses** Regulatory Framework (**TCRF**) set out the regulations governing the recognition of prior learning. This procedure and the associated guidance set out how applications for RPL as identified above are processed.

2. Principles

- 2.1 The following principles govern consideration of claims for recognition of prior learning:
 - a) Decisions about the recognition of prior learning take account of *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* and the *Higher education credit framework for England: guidance on academic credit arrangements in higher education in England*.
 - b) Decisions about the recognition of prior learning are assessment decisions, and not simply admission decisions.
 - c) The principles associated with good practice in the management of assessment apply equally to processes for the RPL: transparency, fairness, consistency, reliability, and validity.
 - d) Credit is given for relevant and recent learning and not for experience alone.
 - e) Assessment of claims for RPL must confirm the level, volume, currency and relevance of the claim.
 - f) Credit is not normally awarded for learning that has taken place more than six years previously, and in the case of some awards the currency of learning may have a shorter shelf life.
 - g) The principles of internal and external moderation of RPL apply.
 - h) All decisions regarding RPL should be recorded on the standard forms to ensure due process has been followed.

- i) The Head of School (or nominee) has responsibility for signing off recommendations for the award of credit through RPL on behalf of the relevant examination board.
- j) The maximum credit that can be awarded under credit transfer or RPL is set out in the TCRF, but generally is no more than two thirds of the total credit value of the award; credit can only be given for whole modules.

| Award | Credit required for award | Maximum credit allowed | 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 | 240 | 4/5/6 |
| Degree with Honours | 360 | 240 | 4/5/6 |
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| Postgraduate Certificate | 60 (M) | 30(M) | 7 |
| Postgraduate Diploma | 120 (M) | 60 (M) | 7 |
| Taught Master’s Degree (MA or MSc, MEd, MBA etc) | 180 (M) | 120 (M) | 7 |
| Masters by Research (MRes) | 180 (M) | 60 (M) | 7 |
| Professional Doctorate | 180 (M) + 360 (D) | 180) | 7 and 8 |

- k) Prior achievement of HE credit or qualifications is not automatically granted recognition in relation to University of Worcester (UW) programmes; it depends on the currency and the relevance of the learning to the UW programme, as well as it being at the appropriate academic level and of sufficient volume.

3. Procedures

- 3.1 Applications for RPL are administered by the Admissions Office (or in the case of research degrees, by the Research School) in association with the relevant admissions tutor (or RPL Advisor).
- 3.2 Applications for RPL are normally considered at the point of application to a course or programme at the University, and decisions made alongside the admissions process, and no later than two weeks after the commencement of the programme. Only in exceptional circumstances will later claims be considered. Decisions on claims for RPL are final and appeals against decisions are not permitted, although the complaints procedure may be followed if an applicant is unhappy with the process followed or feedback.
- 3.3 Admissions tutors (or RPL Advisors) are responsible for ensuring appropriate internal and external assessment and moderation of applications in line with the procedures set out below.
- 3.4 Where courses regularly deal with applications for recognition of prior learning, Schools Institutes can establish approved processes for dealing with these in terms of how applications are assessed, with an RPL committee or panel confirming decisions on behalf of the examination board. In such cases, a sample of the RPL claims are presented to the external examiner for moderation at the end of the year.
- 3.5 For courses where there are only a small number of claims in any given year, the involvement of the external examiner in all decisions for recognition of prior learning (but not credit

transfer) is expected. This is normally carried out electronically. Recommendations are then confirmed by the Head of School (or nominee) on behalf of the examination board.

- 3.6 Applicants who wish to make a claim covering more than one type of RPL should be advised to ensure that they complete the relevant sections of each application form that applies and to provide all supporting evidence.
- 3.7 Charges are made for RPEL to cover the advice and guidance necessary and the administration associated with process of claims. See Annexe 1 for current charges.

4. Procedure for assessing applications for credit transfer

- 4.1 Applications from students who have completed UW validated Foundation Degrees, Higher Nationals, Cert HE, PG Certificates or Diplomas or other qualifications to progress to a linked or identified ‘top-up’ or progression route, require no special consideration since these are based on agreed progression opportunities.
- 4.2 Applications to level 6 ‘top-up’ awards that meet the standard entry requirements for the award, also require no special consideration since these are considered at the point of course approval.
- 4.3 Applications from students who have completed Foundation Degrees, Higher Nationals, CertHE, PG Certificates or Diplomas or other qualifications validated by HE awarding bodies other than UW, normally require more detailed consideration. These applications will require an assessment of the relevance of the completed HE qualification to the programme applied for, and for this reason it may be necessary to request further information from the applicant and/or meet with the applicant to ascertain the relevance of the prior learning and the volume of credit that can be recognised. The objective of the process is to ensure applicants entering with ‘advanced standing’ are not disadvantaged.
- 4.4 For undergraduate entry to level 5 on the basis of credit transfer there is some flexibility in relation to the matching of prior learning to specific modules – the general principle is that if the applicant has general HE credit and is judged able to cope with entry to level 5 of the course for which they have applied, the credit will be recognised; it need not be in the same discipline area as the UW course. Credit transfer for entry to level 6 of undergraduate programmes and for postgraduate programmes is more concerned with ascertaining whether the applicant can demonstrate they have met the appropriate learning outcomes at module and programme level, and therefore the prior credit should be directly relevant to the course applied for.

| Process for consideration of applications for credit transfer | |
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| 1 | Admissions Office/Research School/Admissions Tutor advises applicant to complete Credit Transfer Form. |
| 2 | Credit Transfer Form and application forwarded to admissions tutor. |
| 3 | Admissions tutor and course leader consider application for Credit Transfer (requesting further information from the applicant and/or meeting with the applicant as necessary) and complete Credit Transfer Form. |
| 4 | Completed Credit Transfer Form is forwarded to Admissions Office/Research School. |
| 5 | Admissions Office/Research School informs applicant of outcome of claim and, if accepted, requests copy of transcript of previous study (if not previously provided). |

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| 6 | Once evidence received, Credit Transfer against the relevant stage/s and/or modules, is recorded on the student record system as APL (Achieved Prior Learning). |
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5. Procedure for assessing applications for recognition of prior certificated learning

- 5.1 Recognition of prior certificated learning (such as professional development awards or employment-based awards) which is at higher education level but which has not led to the award of credits or qualifications positioned on the relevant higher education qualifications framework, requires detailed consideration. These applications require assessment of the certificated learning in relation to the *level and volume of credit* that can be recognised in relation to the programme applied for.
- 5.2 Applicants should have the opportunity to discuss their potential claim with the admissions tutor or RPL Advisor who provides guidance on the mapping and information required to support a claim.
- 5.3 It is the responsibility of the applicant to demonstrate the relevance of their prior learning, by mapping to the programme and/or module learning outcomes of the award for which they are seeking credit recognition.
- 5.4 At the discretion of the admissions tutor/course leader the applicant may be asked to attend an interview to discuss their application. In some cases it may be decided that the application is better considered under the processes for recognition of prior experiential learning. The objective of the process is to assess the learning, in terms of level, currency, volume and relevance.
- 5.5 The completed claim is normally considered by the admissions tutor and the course leader. If both of these have been extensively engaged in advising the applicant, an independent colleague should act as one of the assessors. The purpose of the assessment is to make a recommendation about the level and volume of credit that can be recognised. The assessment may conclude that the learning is not at the appropriate level and/or not relevant to the new course, or may recommend that only a small part of the prior learning can be recognised towards the award. As for credit transfer, in relation to relevance there is normally more flexibility for entry at level 5.
- 5.6 Annually a sample of RPL claims (minimum number 5) should be presented to the external examiner for comment, as part of moderation activity.

| Process for consideration of applications for recognition of prior certificated learning | |
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| 1 | Admissions Office/Research School advises applicant to complete RPL Form and/or arranges for admissions tutor to contact or meet with applicant to advise on making a claim. |
| 2 | Admissions tutor (or RPL Advisor) discusses with applicant potential for making a successful claim. |
| 3 | Admissions tutor provides applicant with Programme and/or Module specifications for UW course, indicating those modules where applicant should map learning to learning outcomes. |
| 4 | Applicant forwards completed RPL Form, mapping document and associated supporting documents to admissions tutor. |

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| 5 | Admissions tutor and course leader assess the claim (if either of these individuals has been extensively engaged in advising the applicant, a colleague who has not been involved should act as an independent assessor) taking account of University criteria for assessment of RPL claims. |
| 6 | Assessors complete the RPL form, and the completed form and related documents are forwarded to the Quality Coordinator to confirm the assessment of credit to be awarded. |
| 7 | Head of School (or nominee) checks RPL Form and confirms recommendation (or not) on behalf of the exam board, before forwarding to Admissions Office/ Research School. |
| 8 | Admissions Office/Research School informs applicant of outcome of claim and RPL is recorded against the relevant stage/s and/or modules on the student record system as RPCL (Recognition of prior certificated learning). |

6. Procedure for assessing applications of prior experiential learning

- 6.1 Recognition of prior experiential or informal learning, requires a two stage process of advisory discussion, followed by assessment of the learning. These applications require decisions as to the means by which the experiential learning will be assessed, the provision of advice and guidance to the applicant in demonstrating their learning, before assessment by independent assessors of the experiential learning in relation to level and volume of credit that can be recognised.
- 6.2 There are a range of ways in which prior experiential learning can be assessed. Most usually applicants are asked to provide an evaluative and analytical account of the learning and how it relates to specified modules of the course for which they are applying. This will normally be in the form of a 3,000 – 4,000 word written account or equivalent, and it will also normally involve an interview. However, alternative means of assessing prior learning include completing the assessments for relevant modules, preparing a presentation and engaging in a professional dialogue with University assessors. For some discipline areas a portfolio of work or artefacts may be the appropriate means of assessment, although this is normally accompanied by a reflective discussion or written account.
- 6.3 Applicants considering a claim for recognition of prior experiential learning will be assigned an advisor to provide guidance on making an appropriate claim.
- 6.4 The completed claim should normally be considered by the admissions tutor and course leader. If both of these have been extensively engaged in advising the applicant, an independent colleague should act as one of the assessors. The purpose of the assessment is to make a recommendation about the level and volume of credit that can be recognised. The assessment may conclude that the learning is not at the appropriate level and/or not relevant to the new course, or may recommend that only a small part of the prior learning can be recognised towards the award. As for credit transfer and recognition of prior certificated learning, in relation to relevance there is normally more flexibility in relation to entry at level 5.

| Process for consideration of applications of prior experiential learning | |
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| 1 | Admissions Office/Research School receives enquiry regarding recognition of experiential learning in relation to specific course. |
| 2 | Admissions Office/Research School contacts admissions tutor or RPL Advisor to arrange advisory meeting (which can take place via Skype (or similar) or telephone where appropriate) with applicant. |

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| 3 | Applicant meets with admissions tutor (or RPL Advisor) to discuss in principle the potential of RPL claim and how it might be assessed. |
| 4 | Admissions tutor agrees with course leader the process for assessment of the RPL claim, completes the RPL form and informs the applicant what they must do, providing appropriate guidance. |
| 5 | Applicant completes assessment of learning task and forwards this, together with RPL form, to Admissions Office/Research School. |
| 6 | Admissions tutor and course leader assess the claim (if either of these individuals has been extensively engaged in advising the applicant, a colleague who has not been involved should act as an independent assessor) taking account of University criteria for assessment of RPL claims. |
| 7 | Assessors complete the RPL form, and the completed form and related documents are sent by the course leader (or designated nominee) to the external examiner to confirm the assessment of credit to be awarded. |
| 8 | The application and related RPL documents are reviewed by the external examiner to confirm the assessment of credit to be awarded. |
| 9 | Completed RPL form and external examiner confirmation and/or comment are forwarded to Quality Coordinator for sign off. |
| 10 | Head of School (or nominee) checks completion of RPL form and comment of external examiner and confirms recommendation (or not) on behalf of the exam board, before forwarding to Admissions Office/Research School. |
| 11 | Admissions Office/Research School informs applicant of outcome of claim and RPL is recorded against the relevant stage/s and/or modules on the student record system as RPEL (Recognition of prior experiential learning). |

6.5 Where **Schools** or course have significant numbers of claims for recognition of prior experiential learning, they may wish to consider establishing a small committee to deal with these and agreeing with the external examiner that a sample will be moderated annually. Such arrangements must be formally approved by IQC and auditable records must be maintained.

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Revision History

| Committee | Date | Change |
|---------------------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| Academic Board Chairs Action | 10 August 2021 | Minor Changes |
| Academic Board v1.0 | 30 April 2014 | New procedure Approved |

Annexe 1

Charges for RPL

a. Recognition of prior experiential or informal learning

Applications for credit awarded using experiential prior learning will be charged a fee of 30% linked to the credit awarded at the prevailing module rate.

The remaining modules to be taken will be charged for at the prevailing module rate.

b. Payment

At the point of registration, students will be invoiced the normal advertised fee for the relevant module/level they are hoping to be awarded credit for, unless the application can be assessed prior to registration. Students will be asked to pay or agree to pay the full tuition fee by direct debit, until the outcome of the RPEL assessment is known.

Upon successful accreditation of the prior learning the student will be refunded the value of the module(s) for which credit has been awarded less the applicable RPL charge.

The same percentage charges apply to both Home and International Students.