



Recognition of Prior Learning Procedures for Higher Education

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Revision history

Version	Type (e.g. replacement, revision etc...)	Date	History (reason for changes)
V1	New	Sept 2016	Significant change of previous policy due to new awarding body confirmation
V2	Revision	Jan 2020	Revision due to College restructure
V3	Revision	Sept 2021	Revision due to changing roles and responsibilities
V4	Revision	Oct 2022	Change in ownership
V5	Annual Review	August 2023	No significant changes

Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed by the Academic Board and SLT at least every 2 years.

1. Scope of Procedures

This purpose of these procedures is to document the procedures which underpin the College's policy for the recognition of students' prior learning, the generic term used for the recognition of certificated, and non-certificated (experiential) learning that has occurred at some time in the past, and can be assessed as equivalent to the learning of modules/units or stages of study in a chosen course of study, within a College higher education programme (e.g. degree, certificate and Edexcel Pearson BTEC HNC/D).

These procedures follow the principles and guidance contained in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and has been developed with reference to associated Advice and Guidance relating to Admissions, Recruitment and Widening Access.

The Procedures align with the requirements of the College's validation partner (University of Bolton) and Awarding Body (Pearson).

The procedures support the College's commitment to support widening participation and access to higher education.

The procedures should be read in conjunction with the associated 'Bradford College Recognition of Prior Learning Policy'. Applicants will not be disadvantaged in anyway because they have used these procedures. All correspondence must be completed in accordance with the associated procedures.

2. Definitions

RPL	The generic term used for the recognition of certificated, and non-certificated (experiential) learning that has occurred at some time in the past, and is of equivalence to modules/units or stages of study in their chosen course of study, and which can be assessed and accredited within that College higher education programme.
RPCL	Recognition of prior certificated learning i.e. learning for which certification has been awarded by an educational institution or another education/training provider i.e. this is normally a recognised course of study that is at a particular academic level and carries a credit rating.
RP(E)L	Recognition of prior experiential learning i.e. uncertificated learning gained from prior experience, work experience or training/study, and which is capable of being assessed and accredited as equivalent to the learning outcomes of modules/stages of study.
Advanced Standing	Occurs where an applicant enters an approved course of study at a stage later than the normal entry point of the course, with a previous qualification or other certificated learning, that is current and at the appropriate academic level, and maps against the learning outcomes of the earlier stage of study.

General credit	Credit for prior learning that indicates a particular quality and level – but only become of value in terms of accreditation when they are matched against a particular set of learning outcomes and become specific credit.
Specific credit	Prior learning that has been assessed against a particular set of learning outcomes and can be accredited against a specific module and/or stage of a programme leading to an award.
Portfolio of evidence	A collection of evidence completed by an applicant which is used to judge individual achievement, usually as part of a claim for experiential learning:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It demonstrates reflection in the learning from prior experience • It presents claims to that learning • It contains relevant evidence, enabling claims to be evaluated

3. Roles and Responsibilities

All Higher Education Curriculum Staff are responsible for:

- Understanding the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy and Procedures
- Being able to effectively counsel applicants in the use of the RPL Policy and Procedures
- Discharging their responsibilities associated with the RPL procedures effectively

The Senior Leadership Team are responsible for:

- Ensuring that the College discharge their responsibilities relating to RPL in line with the policy and procedures of Awarding Organisations
- Responsibility and accountability for the management and governance of RPL procedures
- Ensuring that mechanisms are in place to verify a consistent approach to the way RPL is assessed and approved
- Approving revisions to the RPL Policy and Procedures

Academic Board are responsible for:

- Recommending approval of the RPL Policy and Procedures to Senior Leadership
- Monitoring the effective utilisation of RPL Policy and Procedures
- Instructing the inclusion of approved RPL in the Award and Progression of Students through Assessment Board

The Student Recruitment and Admissions Team are responsible for:

- Discharging efficient and effective RPL processes to support Admission to Bradford College programmes of study
- Recording accurate information regarding RPL applications and ensuring the storage of applications in line with the College's Record Management Policy
- Offering advice and guidance to Academic staff on the RPL policy and procedure
- Ensuring that successful RPL claims are added to the student record following enrolment

The Quality Department are responsible for:

- Monitoring the accurate and effective utilisation of the RPL Policy and Procedures
- Coordinating academic approval of applications for RPL

The Vice Principal, Quality Teaching and Learning is responsible for:

- As Chair of Academic Board, approving RPL applications
- As Chair of Academic Board, ensuring the effective monitoring of RPL procedures by the Board

4. Introduction

The College wishes to promote the recognition and accreditation of students' prior learning and experience wherever it is current, valid, capable of objective assessment and verification, and of sufficient quality and quantity to be regarded as equivalent to specific units/modules or stages in a programme of study.

The central principle in awarding student's credit is that credit is granted for learning achieved, not just for experience alone. Students making a claim for credit must be able to demonstrate:-

- that valid learning has taken place
- that it is sufficient to substantiate their claim
- that it is of the same value as that which would have been gained by study at College.

Within its Higher Education Degree Awards, regulations will normally set a maximum limit to the amount of credit that a student can be awarded, and the College applies these requirements to its higher education programmes.

A five year rule normally applies to the currency of certificated learning. This aligns with the requirements of the University of Bolton. Applicants for Recognition of Prior Learning are advised to read this policy in advance of an application for RPL.

4. Recognition of Prior Learning for Academic Credit towards a Programme of Study

RPL may be used for:

- gaining entry, at the initial point of entry, to a programme of study
- gaining entry at a point subsequent to the initial entry point to a programme of study (Advanced Entry or Advanced Standing);
- recognising previously accumulated credit which can then count towards an award.

The use of RPL for academic credit towards a programme of study is an assessment process contained within the admissions procedures of the College. As such, the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and associated Advice and Guidance documents relating to Admissions are applied to these procedures.

The Quality Code sets out the following Core Practice, which higher education providers are expected to meet:

The provider has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system

In addition, the College adheres to the Expectations for Standards and Quality of the Quality Code, recognising the role that a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system plays in our ability to assure the value and academic standards of all programmes of Higher Education and obligations to support students' academic and professional achievement.

4.2 The Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL)

The recognition of prior certificated learning involves the transfer of credit, or exemption from part of a programme, for learning that has previously been assessed.

Credit for prior certificated learning may be counted towards a subsequent award requiring further credits at the same and/or higher level(s) where it can be established that this is consistent with the approved aims, intended learning outcomes and curriculum of the award.

However:

- Credit will not normally be transferable in this way where the previous and subsequent award titles are effectively the same, as stated in the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ);
- Credit will not normally be transferable in this way if it is considered not to be educationally desirable to do so because of the similarity of the aims, intended learning outcomes or curricula of the programmes leading to the two award titles (double counting);
- Credit for previous certificated study awarded by a recognised body are equivalent to those awarded for study at the College.

4.3 The Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)

RPEL involves an assessment process that leads to recognition of experiential learning, normally through the award of credit. This process requires the evidence of learning to extend beyond a simple verification that the learning experience has taken place.

The initial assessment of RPEL takes place in the relevant School or Curriculum Area. The School/Curriculum Area are required to satisfy themselves that the applicant has sufficient knowledge and skill to have a reasonable expectation of successfully completing the programme of study.

If the School/Curriculum Area is not able to satisfy its self that the evidence of experiential learning is equivalent to the learning outcomes of the module/unit or stage of study for which RPL is sought, they may require the applicant to undertake an appropriate method of assessment.

Once a School/Curriculum Area has satisfied themselves that the evidence for RPEL is appropriate to assure the reasonable expectation of an applicant successfully completing the programme of study, it will submit this applicant for approval.

5. Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies and RPL

RPL may only be considered where the requirements of a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) are met and RPL is permitted by the PSRB. The Admission Department will advise any applicant of exclusions of these procedures as a result of a PSRB accreditation.

6. Process for Making a Claim for RPL

Please note, there is no cost for an application for the Recognition of Prior Learning.

6.1 Claims for the Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning

In applications for the Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning, documented evidence forms the basis of the claim. The process for consideration of this is laid out below.

(a) The Process

Step 1: compile the evidence: The applicant will be advised by the Admissions department on the assembly of required evidence. This may include (but is not restricted to) academic transcripts, certificates and academic references, mapping of aims and learning outcomes.

Step 2: submit the RPCL claim: The applicant will be required to submit their compiled evidence together with an RPL claim form to the Admissions Department.

Step 3: the assessment of claims for RPCL: The Admissions Department will forward the evidence and RPL claim form to the relevant Programme Leader for Assessment. At this point, the Programme Leader may request further evidence in order to be able to assess the claim. Once the Programme Leader is satisfied that the claim meets the requirement of the RPL Policy and Admissions requirements of the programme they will submit their assessment to the Admissions Department. The Admissions Department will send this claim forward for approval by the Chair of Academic Board. In the event that the claim has not been successful, the Admissions Department will liaise with the applicant. The process of appeal against a rejected RPL claim is stipulated in Section 8.

Step 4: The RPCL claim is assessed by the Chair of Academic Board. The Chair will either approve or dismiss the claim. The decisions of the Chair are ratified by the relevant departmental Exam Board.

Step 5: If a claim has been approved, the student will be informed of this by the Admissions Department. Approval of RPL claims does not constitute the removal of any additional admission requirements to the programme of study.

6.2 Claims for the Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning

A claim for RPEL places the responsibility on the (prospective) student to make a specific claim for recognition of prior learning. In compiling this claim, an applicant will draw on their own experience, unique circumstances and learning. They will be required to identify appropriate forms of supporting evidence for this reflection on their case for a claim.

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.

The process for assembling a claim for RPEL may be an iterative process, but the submitted claim must meet the following criteria:

- learning must be clearly differentiated from experience. It is the applicant's evidence of knowledge, understanding and skills which are assessed for credit, not the experience in itself;
- learning must be at a level appropriate to the a programme offered by the College;
- knowledge, understanding and skills must be current. While experience may have occurred at any time, the claimant must be able to demonstrate that the acquired learning is up to date and has current applicability;

- The learning evidenced should be transferable, showing an ability to apply learning to a broader context;
- learning must be capable of being assessed by an expert in an appropriate curriculum area.

(b) The Process

The main steps in the RPEL process are:

Step 1: Demonstrating the learning experience: This may include (but is not limited to) work, education, voluntary work, travel, leisure interests or reading & research. The submission for RPEL will normally contain a portfolio of evidence and reflection, including (but not limited to): direct evidence (e.g. work, reflection, databases, workbooks) and indirect evidence (e.g. employer testimonials, feedback, CPD records and appraisals).

Step 2: Identifying the precise learning claims: The portfolio put forward for RPEL is expected to contain specific claims relating to the claimant's learning. It is important that claims are expressed in a way which indicates as precisely as possible the nature and the level of learning. The assessment of precise learning claims will be considered by the Programme Leader.

Step 3: the assessment of claims for RPEL: At this point, the Programme Leader may request further evidence in order to be able to assess the claim. Once the Programme Leader is satisfied that the claim meets the requirement of the RPL Policy and Admissions requirements of the programme they will submit their assessment to the Admissions Department. In the event that the claim has not been successful at this stage, the Admissions Department will liaise with the applicant. The process of appeal against a rejected RPL claim is stipulated in Section 8.

Step 5: Approval of the RPEL claim: The RPEL claim is assessed the Chair of Academic Board. The Chair will either approve or dismiss the claim. If approved, the Chair will assign credit points at the appropriate level to the experiential learning. The decisions of the Chair are ratified by the relevant departmental Exam Board (see section 7).

Step 6: If a claim has been approved, the student will be informed of this by the Admissions Department. All applicants should receive summative feedback on their application for RPL. RPL claims are an alternative assessment tool and applicants should gain from this process as they would from the assessment process of a module. Approval of RPL claims does not constitute the removal of any additional admission requirements to the programme of study.

7. The Role of Exam Boards

Once claims for RPL have been submitted and assessed, RPL is presented to the Exam Board for ratification. The usual policies and procedures relating to mitigating circumstances and academic misconduct apply.

8. Resubmission and Appeals of Unsuccessful Claims for RPL

8.1 Resubmission of Unsuccessful RPL Claims

RPL claimants whose claim for credit is unsuccessful may be permitted one resubmission at the discretion of the Programme Leader.

8.2 Appeals in Relation to Unsuccessful Claims

Claimants may request a review of the decisions of the RPL assessment under the College's Appeal Policy if it is believed they meet the grounds outlined in the Policy.

Note: As recorded in the College's Appeals Policy, decisions based on academic judgement cannot form the basis of an appeal. Submission of an appeal is only possible once the decision on a claim for RPL has been decided by the Chair of Academic Board.

9. Limits on RPL Claims

The limits on RPL credits are aligned with the requirements of the University of Bolton who validate the Higher Education awards of the College.

Applications can be made for any level of a College programme subject to any limitations detailed in the programme specification (e.g. limits imposed by course teams or professional bodies) and as stated below.

Formal certificated learning that has occurred up to five years prior to the start date of the award will normally be considered. The smallest unit of recognition will be one module.

The maximum credit claimable through an RPL process is normally two thirds of the total credits for an undergraduate qualification and half of the total credits for a taught postgraduate qualification, although lower thresholds may be applied in some instances, as illustrated below. Exceptions to these rules for specific programmes may be approved by the University from time-to-time through the programme approval process, where there is a strong academic case to do so. Variations from limits in Figure 1 will be recorded in the relevant programme specification. In determining the precise volume of credit exemption applied, due regard will be paid to the overall educational experience and ensuring that there is experience of the taught component of a taught programme.

Exclusions

- RPL may not be claimed against any component of a 'top-up' degree programme.
- No RPL credit will be awarded for the dissertation element of an Undergraduate or Masters programme.

Figure 1. Normal limits on RPL Credit for intended awards

Award Type	Number of Credit Points for Award	Total amount of RPL credits permitted
Undergraduate Awards		
Certificate of Higher Education	120	80
Diploma of Higher Education	240	120
Foundation Degree	240	120
Honours Degree	360	240
Postgraduate Level Award		
Postgraduate Certificate	60	30
Postgraduate Diploma	120	60
Master's Degree	180	90

10. Marks Awarded for RPL and Impact on Classifications

When a student is awarded credits as a result of a claim for RPL, no marks will normally be awarded. Therefore, award classification will be based purely on the modules taken at Bradford College.

Where an award offers the possibility of passing with merit or distinction as in the case of taught Postgraduate programmes, a candidate who has been admitted with RPL credit must have attained the following amount of credit to be eligible to be considered for merit or distinction:

- For a Foundation Degree 120 credits achieved at Bradford College
- For a Postgraduate Certificate: 30 credits achieved at Bradford College
- For a Postgraduate Diploma: 60 credits achieved at Bradford College
- For a Master's Degree: 90 credits achieved at Bradford College

Where a student may be considered for an exit qualification, normally only 50% of the credits required for that qualification may be drawn from RPL.

11. Quality Assurance

The Quality and Information Services Department will conduct an annual review of RPL activity which will be submitted to Academic Board for consideration. This review will include:

- The volume and levels of RPL claims during the previous 12 months
- Recommendations for any amendment to the RPL Policy and Procedure
- School or Curriculum Area summaries of activity relating to RPL
- Any Institutional-wide issues relating to, or having an implication for, the successful maintenance of standards associated with RPL.

Related Policies/Procedures/Regulations

- Recognition of Prior Learning Policy
- University of Bolton Recognition of Prior Learning Policy