

# Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and credit transfer

**The University may admit a student with advanced standing beyond the beginning of a course, through an assessment of that student's prior learning, whether certificated or uncertificated. The process for making such a decision is known as the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).**

## 1. Definitions

1.1 In its documentation, Schools should adopt the definitions set out below so that there is consistency in the use of language across the University.

- **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)** – a process for assessing and, as appropriate, recognising prior experiential learning or prior certificated learning for academic purposes. This recognition may lead to credits that can be counted towards the completion of a course and the award(s) associated with it – i.e. admission with advanced standing.
- **Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL)** – relates to prior 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. A process of assessment enables a decision to be made about whether the learning is suitable for recognition. RPCL may lead to the award of NTU credits and exemption from certain modules to reflect prior learning and achievement.
- **Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)** – a process through which learning achieved outside education or training systems is assessed and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes.
- **Credit transfer** – credit transfer allows a student to utilise credit awarded by a UK higher-education degree awarding body in accordance with the relevant higher education qualifications framework towards a similar or related course at another university. The University to which the student is applying for credit transfer determines the status of the credit gained and the

extent to which it can be utilised in relation to the course the student has applied to study. This process does not guarantee that credit gained will be accepted in part or full by another University but does allow students to potentially utilise existing credit towards another course, thereby making it easier to transfer.

- **Advanced Standing** – the term used to describe the admission of a student beyond the beginning of a course through RPL.

1.2 This policy relates to recognition of prior learning for advanced standing only and does not cover the processes through which prior experiential or certificated learning is considered for admission to the beginning of a course, although it may be useful as a guide for making these decisions. The University's policy on RPL for admission to the beginning of a course are outlined in Quality Handbook Section 13: Admissions.

1.3 This policy does not apply to apprenticeships. Apprentices will each undertake an individual needs assessment before they are enrolled on the course, in line with Education and Skills Funding Agency guidance.

## 2. Principles

- 2.1 A student may wish to transfer to a course at another Higher Education Provider for a range of reasons and should be able to do so without arbitrary restrictions which are not proportionate or based on irreconcilable concerns regarding prior course content or academic performance. Credits achieved at another UK higher education provider should be regarded as of the same value as NTU credits.
- 2.2 Admission requirements must state any course-specific RPL procedures and requirements where these differ those of the University. This should include any time limit on prior learning for it to be considered current and relevant, which will vary depending on the discipline.
- 2.3 Schools, course teams and student support services should provide support for students to transfer with advanced standing either into an NTU course from another institution or from an NTU course to another institution and should provide feedback on decisions made.
- 2.4 Decisions regarding RPL are a matter of academic judgement. The decision-making process and outcomes adopted by Schools and course teams should be transparent and demonstrably rigorous and fair.
- 2.5 Applicants may be admitted with credit for specific modules, levels or stages within the course that they wish to study.
- 2.6 The authority and responsibilities for making and verifying decisions about RPL should be clearly specified in School and course team procedures.

### Notes

- Where cohorts or students are to be admitted with advanced standing on a regular basis, the arrangement should be subject to an Articulation (Advanced Standing) Agreement (see Quality Handbook Supplement PS2: Requirements for Articulation Agreements).

- Entitlement to post-graduate loans may be affected if a student accepts a place on a course with advanced standing. Students should be made aware of this at the point of enquiry.

### Grading

- 2.7 The University does not normally apply grades to credit that has been transferred from another institution. Where transferred credit contributes to the final award, the classification is determined on the basis of credit undertaken at NTU.

### Application Fees

- 2.8 The University does not charge students a fee for Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning or credit transfer applications.
- 2.9 Individual Schools may charge a fee for Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning and this will be determined locally. Schools must make details of the fee available to applicants at the point of enquiry.
- 2.10 Where a student is required to undertake module assessment, the assessment fee for the module may be charged.

### Course fees

- 2.11 Course fees are reduced in proportion to the amount of prior learning granted. For example, if exemption from 60 credits at level 4 was granted, the student would only pay half of the course fee for the year.

### Credit limits and exemptions

- 2.12 The normal minimum credit limit for a claim for RPL is one module. A student may make an RPL claim for part of a module but will not be awarded the credit for that module until they have satisfied the full set of module outcomes.
- 2.13 The normal credit limits for advanced standing with RPL are as follows:

| Title of award                           | Credits  | Maximum RPL permitted                            |
|--|--|--|
| Higher Certificate                       | 120 credits at level 4   | 60 credits at level 4                            |
| Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE) | 120 credits at level 4   | 60 credits at level 4                            |
| Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE)      | 120 credits at level 4<br>120 credits at level 5                           | 120 credits at level 4                           |
| Foundation degree                        | 120 credits at level 4<br>120 credits at level 5                           | 120 credits at level 4                           |
| Ordinary degree                          | 120 credits at level 4<br>120 credits at level 5<br>60 credits at level 6  | 120 credits at level 4<br>120 credits at level 5 |
| Honours degree                           | 120 credits at level 4<br>120 credits at level 5<br>120 credits at level 6 | 120 credits at level 4<br>120 credits at level 5 |

|                            |  |   |
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| Integrated master's degree | 120 credits at level 4<br>120 credits at level 5<br>120 credits at level 6<br>120 credits at level 7 | 120 credits at level 4<br>120 credits at level 5<br>40 credits at level 6 |
| Postgraduate certificate   | 60 credits at level 7  | 30 credits at Level 7   |
| Postgraduate diploma       | 120 credits at level 7   | 60 credits at level 7   |
| Master's degree            | 180 credits at level 7   | 120 credits at level 7  |

2.14 A student who has obtained an award (with or without RPL) should be able to re-use the credit from that award towards an award at a higher level – normally on one occasion only.

2.15 It is also possible for such a student to seek to obtain a second award at the same level using credit from the first award (subject to the maximum two thirds rule).

- Exemplar: A student may have obtained a BSc (Hons) in Computer Science but within a few years – for career purposes – wishes to obtain a BSc (Hons) in Games Technology for which there is no suitable graduate conversion course. In these and similar circumstances, it may be appropriate for the student to be granted RPCL for the second award on the basis of relevant modules taken on the initial BSc (Hons) Computer Science course.

2.16 Courses with a PSRB accreditation may not allow credit transfer or may not allow for certain modules to be considered for credit transfer. Where this is the case, clear information is provided to the student at the point of exit from one University and at the point of application for credit transfer to another.

### 3. Provision of information on RPL

3.1 Schools and course teams should provide clear and accessible information for applicants, academic staff and examiners about any course-specific RPL procedures or requirements. This information should be made clear in the course entry requirements. Care should be taken to ensure that the information to potential students is equally accessible to all groups of applicants.

3.2 Course leaders are ultimately responsible for ensuring that any the main features of the course's RPL requirements are clearly set out for prospective students at the point of firm enquiry or application. For undergraduate courses, admissions are responsible for communicating this information to the student.

3.3 Offer letters must include any implications of accepting a place on a course with advanced standing, for example, for professional registration with a PSRB.

3.4 Where courses allow for on-course RPL, course leaders are also responsible for ensuring that its RPL requirements are included in the course handbook provided at induction.

- 3.5 Information provided to students at the point of enquiry and in the course handbook where courses allow for on-course RPL should include the following:
- i. the range and form(s) of evidence required to support an RPL claim including and any time limits on the currency of evidence supplied, together with the assessments utilised to consider those claims;
  - ii. the submission deadline;
  - iii. the criteria to be used in judging an application for RPL;
  - iv. the timescale for considering RPL claims and the timing and form of outcomes;
  - v. the stages in the process and the responsibilities of the applicant;
  - vi. a named contact responsible for supporting the student through the application process;
  - vii. any implications for Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) recognition.
- 3.6 External examiners should be informed about a course's RPL procedures and may be involved in sampling assessments that contribute to the final award. The external examiner should have the opportunity to agree with the course team the extent of their involvement with the advanced standing process.
- 3.7 RPL will be clearly identified on students' transcripts.

#### Notes

- Normally, prior learning will only remain current for a period of time. The University has not determined a standard period of currency as this will vary depending upon the discipline. Course teams should define a normal period based upon its academic professional judgement (and taking into account any PSRB requirements) and this information should be made available as part of entry requirements.

## 4. Application process and timing of claims

- 4.1 Applications should for RPL should be made through the course's normal application process. This will normally be through UCAS for undergraduate courses and the NTU applicant portal for postgraduate courses. Applicants are required to state clearly in their application the year(s) or modules that they are seeking exemption from.
- 4.2 Applications are normally made and completed before a student is admitted to a course, however course teams may allow students to submit a claim after they have registered. Course publicity material should state the lead in time necessary to submit and process a claim for RPL for admission with advanced standing. Where claims are allowed during the course, any deadlines must be made clear in the student handbook.

## 5. Evidence required

- 5.1 The information below is designed to act as guidance only. Staff may employ any appropriate methods of assessment but the chosen method must enable an external examiner and Board of Examiners to verify the decision taken.
- 5.2 It is the responsibility of the applicant to demonstrate that the learning outcomes of the proposed modules or level(s) have been achieved, however the course team should provide assistance in this.
- 5.3 Where assistance is given to an applicant in preparing the portfolio of evidence or other assessment and the individual responsible for providing that support undertakes the assessment, it is particularly important to ensure that there is moderation of the assessment decision reached.

### Credit transfer

- 5.4 Applications for credit transfer must be supported by accompanying evidence such as a transcript of results / Higher Education Achievement Record. However, this may not be sufficient evidence to make a decision about the validity and relevance of learning, as modules with similar titles may have very different content. In some cases, additional evidence may be requested to support the application to allow the admitting University to fully assess the application. This will be defined by the course leader at the time of application and communicated to the student through admissions. Additional evidence may include:
  - a. Course specification, syllabus or handbook;
  - b. A copy of the module specifications, syllabi or handbooks;
  - c. A list of the topics covered in each module;
  - d. Assessment briefs;
  - e. Copies of completed assessments and any grades awarded.
- 5.5 It may not be possible to establish from the list above whether the student has gained the appropriate knowledge, skills and behaviour to transfer with advanced standing to an NTU course. An interview, assessment tasks or other forms for assessment may be required.

### Recognition of prior certificated learning

- 5.6 The type of evidence required to support applications for RPCL will depend on the nature of the learning undertaken. Qualifications undertaken through PSRBs for example, may document more clearly the learning achieved than employer-based courses. Evidence may include:
  - f. Course or qualification specification, syllabus or handbook;
  - g. Copies of course materials;
  - h. A list of the topics or modules studied;
  - i. Copies of completed assessments and any grades awarded.
- 5.7 It may not be possible to establish from the list above whether the student has gained the appropriate knowledge, skills and behaviour to transfer with advanced

standing to an NTU course. An interview, assessment tasks or other forms for assessment may be required.

### Recognition of prior experiential learning

- 5.8 Typically, the evidence is provided in the form of a portfolio, accompanied by clear, written statements detailing the learning acquired and mapping this to the appropriate learning outcomes of the proposed course modules. The applicant is responsible for providing the evidence and the mapping, however, the course team should provide assistance in this task through personal interviews, tutorials or specially designed manuals or study packs.
- 5.9 The portfolio may completely satisfy the intended learning outcomes, however there may be gaps in the evidence that require the student to demonstrate the achievement of the missing outcomes through other means. Besides the portfolio of evidence, assessment tools might include:
- a focused interview or viva;
  - artefacts, models, drawings, etc;
  - specially designed projects, coursework or assignments;
  - completion of a reflective account or diary of the learning achieved through experience;
  - the normal module assessments.

## 6. Making decisions

- 6.1 An applicant has to demonstrate that the relevant level (interim award) or module learning outcomes have been reasonably met. Wherever possible, the criteria to be used when judging an advanced standing claim should be those normally applied to the module or level.
- 6.2 The decision to admit a student with advanced standing should ultimately rest with the course leader. A course leader may process the claim themselves or may delegate authority to staff involved in the admissions process; such staff may need to consult with the appropriate module leader(s) and coordinate a complex claim across several modules. In such cases, module leaders are responsible for assessing the claim and ensuring that the learning derived from RPCL or RPEL reasonably demonstrates the achievement of the module learning outcomes.
- 6.3 Where a student is claiming RPEL, another member of the module team should moderate the portfolio or other form of assessment. Any disputes or significant differences in opinion should be subject to the University's standard moderation policy (see Quality Handbook (QH) Section 15).
- 6.4 Decisions should be made using the following criteria:
- Validity: the learning must be specific and comparable with the standard and content of the NTU course applied for. The evidence should match the learning claimed, and the learning should be appropriate to the module(s) learning outcomes.
  - Currency: the learning must still be current; where learning was acquired some time ago it may be necessary to ask applicants to demonstrate a portfolio of

- more recent achievements demonstrating how they have kept their knowledge up to date.
- c. Sufficiency: there should be sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the outcomes for the learning against which the claim is being made have been reasonably met and that the applicant has sufficient knowledge, skills and understanding to succeed following admission with advanced standing.
  - d. Authenticity: there is sufficient evidence that the claim relates to the applicant's own work.
- 6.5 The decision made on each application and the rationale must be clearly documented.
- 6.6 Advanced standing decisions should be reported to admissions as soon as the decision has been made. Offer letters must include any implications that accepting the offer of entry with advanced standing may have for the student, for example, if it will disqualify them from registration with a PSRB or gaining a professional qualification.
- 6.7 Applicants should normally receive a communication setting out the outcomes of their RPL claim within two weeks of the decision being taken.
- 6.8 Advanced standing decisions should also be notified to the external examiner and the chair of the Board of Examiners as soon as possible after the decision has been made.

## Notes

- Credit may be awarded through RPL for the work experience, residence abroad or professional placement components of a University course, in addition to the taught modules.

## 7. Appeals

- 7.1 This RPL Appeals Process ("this Process") allows an applicant to appeal against the decision of the RPL process using the Applicant Appeals Procedure set out in Quality Handbook Section 13.

## 8. Monitoring and review

- 8.1 The course team should monitor the effectiveness of its recognition of prior learning procedures through interim and periodic course review. As well as evaluating staff reflections on the advanced standing process, as part of periodic course review the course team is expected to collect, consider and act upon feedback from applicants who have made a claim for advanced standing.
- 8.2 Course teams should have mechanisms for tracking and monitoring the progress and performance of applicants who have made a successful claim for advanced standing, including in relation to other applicants who have not made similar claims for recognition.

8.3 The University's Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) will review the University's RPL requirements from time to time in the light of emerging good practice within and outside the University.

8.4 The rate and outcomes of credit transfer applications in particular will be monitored through ASQC.

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| <b>Policy owner</b> |
| CADQ                |

| <b>Change history</b> |                       |                             |  |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| <i>Version:</i>       | <i>Approval date:</i> | <i>Implementation date:</i> | <i>Nature of significant revisions:</i>  |
| Sept 2016             | 30.09.16              | 01.10.16                    | None   |
| Sept 2017             | 12.09.17              | 01.10.17                    | None   |
| Sept 2018             | 12.09.18              | 01.10.18                    | None   |
| Sept 2019             | 11.09.19              | 01.10.19                    | Change of title; scope defined as RPL for advanced standing only; removal of provision to allow RPCL to be graded; inclusion of appeals process. |

| <b>Equality Impact Assessment</b> |                  |                      |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Version:</i>                   | <i>EIA date:</i> | <i>Completed by:</i> |
| Sept 2016                         | 12.09.16         | CADQ                 |
|                                   |                  |                      |
|                                   |                  |                      |