POLICY ON RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING
August 2019

1. Introduction

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a generic term for the process by which Higher Education providers recognise and, where appropriate, award credit for learning that has taken place before entry onto a programme of study.

Through RPL, the University takes into account the range of prior educational experiences of the diverse student body and encourages wider access to its programmes of study.

This policy deals with how prior learning can be recognised to allow exemption from specific modules of a University of Sheffield programme or to allow direct entry to the second year of UG study. The prior learning must be at the same level as the University programme for which the student is applying/undertaking.

There is no obligation for any department to consider requests for RPL if it considers RPL inappropriate to the programme or nature of provision offered, for example due to the requirements of a professional body.

2. Scope

The policy covers recognition of the following forms of prior learning:

i) The recognition of the following types of prior learning which have not previously resulted in the award of credits or qualifications on the UK Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and which will therefore require assessment by the University:

   RPEL  Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning - a process through which learning achieved outside education or training systems is assessed and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes, usually through the award of credit.

   RPCL  Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning - a process, through which prior certificated learning which has not previously resulted in the award of university credits or qualifications positioned on the relevant HE qualifications framework is assessed and recognised by the University of Sheffield for academic purposes, usually through the award of credit. Prior Certificated Learning may include professional development or employment-related awards.

ii) Credit Transfer of credits/qualifications from another UK higher education awarding body for use towards a University of Sheffield qualification or credits from a different programme at the same FHEQ level previously undertaken at the University of Sheffield. As the credits or qualification have been awarded in accordance with the UK Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, the process of recognition requires academic staff to determine the status of the prior credit/award as they relate to the University of Sheffield programme, but will not require a process of assessment as in the case of RPEL and RPCL. See also the policy on Double Counting.

This policy does not cover:
• Prior learning at a lower FHEQ level than the University of Sheffield programme applied for/being undertaken which may be considered towards University entry requirements during the Admissions process.

• The transfer of credits, “advance standing” or other learning within collaborative programmes which is dealt with separately – see Framework for Approval and Management of Collaborative Provision and Credit Transfer Policy.

• The transfer of credits or qualifications awarded by another UK university or by an overseas degree awarding institution as part of a Study Abroad or Erasmus exchange arrangement, which is dealt with separately - see Global Opportunities and Exchanges.

3. Applications

i) Academic departments are responsible for making potential applicants aware of opportunities for recognition of prior learning and for supporting applicants through the process.

ii) Responsibility for submitting an application for RPL, accompanied by supporting evidence, lies with the student. (Guidance for students and application forms will be provided in the near future).

iii) Applications should normally be submitted by the student at the application stage for the programme of study for which credits are being sought. All applications must be submitted by the end of Week 1 of Semester 1.

iv) The University will normally only consider applications for exemption in relation to whole units or modules, not elements of units or modules.

v) Applications will only be considered for taught units, not for a dissertation.

4. Approval of Applications

i) Academic departments are responsible for considering applications and making recommendations on the award of RPL for Faculty approval, in accordance with the University’s policy as set out in this document.

ii) Academic departments that routinely handle RPL applications should have clear written procedures in place for the consideration of such requests. Departments which do not have such procedures in place but wish to consider an RPL application from an individual student, should contact the relevant Faculty Taught Programmes Office contact for advice.

iii) External examiners should be provided with details of RPL procedures by academic departments. See also xi) in relation to external examining.

iv) At least two members of the academic department concerned should be involved in the consideration of the RPL application. This would normally include the Admissions Officer and the Programme Director or Director of Undergraduate/Graduate Studies.

v) In considering applications for Prior Experiential Learning and Prior Certificated Learning, academic departments will assess whether the prior learning is equivalent in terms of learning outcomes, level and volume for the unit(s)/module(s) of the University programme of study against which credit is being sought.
vi) In considering applications for Credit Transfer of UK credits/qualifications, academic departments will determine the status of the prior credit/award as it relates to the University of Sheffield programme.

vii) On certain programmes where, for example, professional and statutory body regulations apply, it may not be possible to consider applications for RPL.

viii) Departments may request further evidence from applicants to substantiate requests and may interview students to assist with the assessment process.

ix) The learning for which credit is being sought should normally have taken place not more than five years prior to the commencement of the University programme of study.

x) It should be noted that credit exemptions may affect a student’s mode of attendance as they will be taking fewer modules. Academic departments should liaise with the Taught Programmes Office to advise students accordingly.

xi) Copies of all applications, supporting evidence and related assessments should be retained within departments for as long as other forms of assessed work, in line with the University’s policy on retention of assessed work. It should be made available to external examiners, if required.

5. Marks and Classification

i) Grades will not normally be attributed to credits that are awarded through RPL.

ii) Classification for First Degrees and the award of Merit or Distinction for Postgraduate Degrees will not normally take into account any grades awarded by prior institutions for units where Credit Transfer has been allowed.

6. Transcripts

The student’s transcript or diploma supplement should clearly identify the modules (units) against which RPL has been awarded, the level and the amount of credits.

7. Fees

Academic departments should provide students with information on fees for RPL. If a student gains a credit exemption for a module or modules, the student may be entitled to a pro-rata reduction in their tuition fees.

Reference points:
UK Quality Code for Higher Education

RPL LIMITATIONS (MAXIMUM NUMBER OF CREDITS)

The table below sets out the maximum number of credits that the University may award through Recognition of Prior Learning.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Award</th>
<th>Recognition of Prior Learning – Maximum Number of Credits</th>
<th>Total Credits Required for Award</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foundation Degree</td>
<td>See notes on Exceptions</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honours Degree</td>
<td>120 credits at Level 1*</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated Masters</td>
<td>120 credits at Level 1*</td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Certificate</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Diploma</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>60 for RPEL/RPCL</td>
<td>180</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>90 for Credit Transfer</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Overall maximum of 90 credits)</td>
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*The University may, within its Regulations, allow Credit Transfer of credits from other UK awarding bodies of up to 120 at Level 1, 120 at Level 2 and 20 at Level 3 credits on UG programmes, subject to an overall maximum of 180 credits. However, cases of Credit Transfer at Levels 2 and 3 are rare. Similarly, for Integrated Masters programmes, the University may allow Credit Transfer of up to 120 at Level 1, 120 at Level 2, 120 at Level 3 and 20 Level 4, subject to an overall maximum of 180.

Although student exchange arrangements are not included in this policy, for comparison purposes the credit limits in the above table also apply to the import of credits from other higher education institutions on Study Abroad and Erasmus exchange schemes.

For credit transfer limitations in relation to collaborative programmes with other institutions please refer to the University’s General Regulations.

EXCEPTIONS

The above credit limitations do not apply to:

1. Apprenticeship-related programmes
   1.1. For programmes which form part of an apprenticeship, the RPL requirements of the relevant Apprenticeship Standard will be applied.
   1.2. Credits/qualifications achieved on an apprenticeship-related programme being counted towards a subsequent University of Sheffield apprenticeship-related programme/qualification (for example, a student who has completed a Higher Apprenticeship and been awarded a Foundation Degree and wishes to take a related top-up FHEQ6 Bachelor’s Degree Apprenticeship programme).
   1.3. The relevant academic department will consider applications as indicated above (Section 4), taking into account Institute for Apprenticeships guidance and the requirements of relevant Apprenticeship Standards.

2. Pre-Registration Nursing programmes
   2.1. Nursing Associate Foundation Degree: recognition of prior learning of up to 50% of the programme (120 of total 240 credits) is permitted, if it can be mapped against the relevant Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) Standards of proficiency for nursing associates and programme outcomes. This maximum limit of 50% does not
apply to applications from NMC registered nurses without restrictions on their practice.

2.2. BMedSci Nursing (Adult): recognition of prior learning of up to 50 percent of the programme (180 of total 360 credits) is permitted, if it can be mapped against the NMC Standards of proficiency for registered nurses and programme outcomes. This maximum limit of 50% does not apply to applications from NMC registered nurses without restrictions on their practice.

2.3. The academic department will consider applications as indicated above (Section 4), and in accordance with NMC requirements.

Faculty approval will be required in all cases, as in 4 i) above.