Higher Education Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy

APPROVED BY ACADEMIC BOARD ON 12.10.26

Applies to:	
Harrogate College	
Keighley College	
Leeds City College	
Leeds Conservatoire	
White Rose Academies Trust	
University Centre Leeds	X

CHANGE CONTROL

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Approved by:	Academic Board	
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Policy will be communicated via:	VLE, Website	
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1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF POLICY

This policy applies to all staff teaching on higher education awards and learners undertaking a higher education award with University Centre Leeds. Its purpose is to ensure that the HE Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy and procedures are implemented consistently across University Centre Leeds and that the requirements of awarding bodies are met. In addition, the HE RPL policy and procedures are fully informed by the requirements of awarding bodies, the revised QAA Quality Code and the QAA Guidelines on RPL.

University Centre Leeds recognises learning wherever it may take place, and that knowledge and skills can be acquired from a whole range of learning experiences, both formal and informal. The term recognition of prior learning (RPL) is used to denote the process by which a substantial and significant element of prior learning is identified, mapped against requirements and formally recognised. We therefore encourage credit transfer and RPL as a means of entry to, or credit within, all our programmes. Such recognition will take place within the context of University Centre Leeds's policy and procedures and within the specific requirements of any external awarding bodies. Definitions of the terminology used within this document and to be used in information to staff, students and stakeholders, can be found in Appendix 1.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

University Centre Leeds's policy is to operate a system for RPL which encompasses the Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) and the Recognition of Certificated Learning in all programmes where it is acceptable to national awarding bodies (excluding top-up years). University Centre Leeds will operate a system for RPL in line with the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and HE institutional collaborative agreements.

The aim of the policy is to enable individuals to:

- Claim exemption against credit without necessarily undertaking formal training and/or sitting examinations for identified areas of learning;
- identify their own training and development needs and be in control of their progress;
- gain recognition for their knowledge, experience and skills against credit bearing qualifications;
- meet employer needs to ensure the accreditation and flexibility of their workforce.

3. POLICY DETAILS

Policy	Higher Education RPL Policy	Quality Code Ref
Principles	• Policies and procedures will be explicit, applied fairly and consistently and outcomes will be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis. • RPL can be used for pre-entry, post-entry or credit transfer applications. • Information and guidance will clearly outline the roles & responsibilities and the process for making an RPL claim including preparation, submission and assessment of a claim for accreditation. • Decisions regarding RPL are a matter of academic judgement. The decision-making	Assessment Guiding Principles: 1, 2, 4, 5

	process and outcomes will be transparent and demonstrably rigorous and fair. • Judgements will be made on the basis of recognised learning wherever it takes place, subject to its identification and assessment and an appropriate evidence base. • Recognition may only be given in line with the limits imposed by individual awarding bodies through the accreditation process. • RPL can only be considered against levels 4 and 5 study. • The minimum credit claim for RPL that can be made is 20 credits and the maximum 180 credits (for Luminate validated awards only) • For OU validated awards a student may be awarded recognition for prior learning (certified, experiential or uncertified), 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) of full master's degrees (a minimum of 180 credits) and not sub-awards, where the usual maximum is 50%. • RPL claims can be made against single modules to a maximum of 50% of a level (60 credits), or against a whole level. • For awards not validated by Luminate Education Group further requirements may need to be met. • For RPCL claims, the prior study being considered for recognition should have been completed no more than 5 years prior to enrolment on the programme against which the credit is being claimed. This is subject to specific programme requirements. • For RPEL claims the experience being considered for recognition should typically be no more than 5 years old. This is subject to specific programme requirements. • Any credit for RPL will be identified as such on student transcripts and will be excluded from average grade calculations (will be recorded as a pass with no grade associated). Hence the credit value of claims will be taken into consideration in relation to progression and award but will not be taken into account in the calculation of the final award/classification. • All decisions will be subject to University Centre Leeds's processes for internal and external moderation. • Information and guidance about plagiarism and other related regulatory requirements will be provided	

	• Learning that has previously been accredited in the award of another qualification cannot be accepted for RPL unless the award is a recognised stage in the progression to a higher award • A system for tracking the progress of RPL students will be kept to monitor the effectiveness of the process • Approval/annual programme evaluation and periodic review processes will ensure that RPL is embedded in programme specifications and handbooks/guidance material. • Appeals on RPL/RPE outcomes can be made following our UC Leeds Appeals Process.	
Process	The chart below summarises the RPL process Stage 1: Expression of Interest Stage 2: Guidance on planning an RPL claim Stage 3: Producing a claim Stage 4: Assessing claim – submission to appropriate Board of the awarding body and confirmation of outcomes Stage 5: Evaluation of process	Assessment Guiding Principles: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9 Expectations for Quality Common Practice 2
Procedures	The RPL Procedure will specifically identify: • Roles and responsibilities within the process for claiming RPL • Evidence requirements • Volume and level for which applications of credit may be made • Timing of applications • Limits of credit for the awarding body and credit which has already contributed to an award • Use of credit value rather than marks or grades awarded by other institutions • Confirmation of parity/comparison of international qualifications through Naric • Currency of prior learning • Feedback mechanisms • The learning support available to students	Assessment Guiding Principles: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
Staff Development and Training	University Centre Leeds requires that all staff associated with the accreditation of prior learning should have their roles and responsibilities clearly and explicitly defined. Full details of all roles and responsibilities will be available to all associated staff and applicants. All staff associated with the support, guidance and assessment of claims will be given appropriate training	Expectations for Quality Core Practice 2

	and development and meet the requirements of the awarding body and where appropriate, the Quality Assurance Agency Code of practice.	
Equality and Diversity Statement	This policy will be implemented in accordance with the Luminate Policy on Valuing Diversity and with consideration of RPL guidelines set out by awarding bodies and where appropriate, the QAA Quality Code	
Monitoring and Review	University Centre Leeds will regularly monitor and review this policy and its associated procedures to assess the effectiveness of its implementation and outcomes	Expectations for Quality Common Practice 1, 3
Regulatory requirements of awarding and professional bodies	University Centre Leeds requires that all staff are aware of and operate under the specific regulatory requirements of its awarding bodies and, where appropriate, professional bodies. University Centre Leeds has developed appropriate internal policies and procedures that cover major requirements.	
Appeals	Appeals against an RPL decision should made in accordance with the Academic Appeals procedure.	Concerns, Complaints and Appeals Core Practice 1
Associated Documentation	• RPL Procedure • Academic Appeals Policy • Academic Appeals Process • Student Guide to Appeals and Complaints • Assessment and Moderation Policy • Assessment and Moderation Handbook • Relevant Awarding Body Academic Regulations	

3. REVIEW

Will be reviewed by HE Registry by July 2029

4. APPENDIX

Appendix 1 – Definitions

Accreditation: is a term frequently used as a synonym for the recognition of learning as defined below. However, it is perhaps more properly used to signify the most formalised and widely practiced forms of recognition.

Acknowledgement: is another term sometimes used to describe the recognition of learning but is usually used in a more broad and non-specific sense and does not necessarily involve the use of standardised mechanisms.

Recognition (of learning): any process that acknowledges and establishes publicly that some reasonably substantial and significant element of learning has taken place and can be assessed to have done so.

Acknowledgement: is another term sometimes used to describe the recognition of learning but is usually used in a more broad and non-specific sense and does not necessarily involve the use of standardised mechanisms.

Recognition of prior learning (RPL): a process for accessing and, as appropriate, recognising prior experiential learning or prior certificated learning for academic purposes. This recognition may give the learning a credit-value in a credit-based structure and allow it to be counted towards the completion of a programme of study and the award(s) or qualifications associated with it.

The term 'recognition of prior learning' is used to encapsulate the range of activity and approaches used formally to acknowledge and establish publicly that some reasonably substantial and significant element of learning has taken place. Such learning may have been recognised previously by an education provider; described as 'prior certificated learning' or it may have been achieved by reflecting upon experiences outside the formal education and training systems; described as 'prior experiential learning'.

Recognition of prior certificated learning (RPCL): a process, through which previously assessed and certificated learning is considered and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes.

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.