

Recognition of Prior Learning policy

1. Introduction

The University policy and procedures for the recognition of prior learning have been reviewed in line with the QAA's UK Quality Code for Higher Education on Assessment published in November 2018. An application may be made for exemption from modules on University undergraduate courses based on the Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL). An application may also be made for exemption on a small number of postgraduate course based on RPCL or on the basis of experience, known as Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL), which may include professional development or employment based awards. The application procedure set out below is designed to ensure that the degree aims are achievable and that the academic standards of the University award are maintained.

See also the [Student Transfer policy](#).

2. Definitions

2.1 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

A generic term covering the exemption of a student from a module/s on taught courses at the University on the basis of prior achievement of the relevant learning outcomes.

2.2 Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL)

An application may be considered for exemption from modules on an undergraduate or postgraduate taught course at the University based on credit or an award made by the University of Sussex, another HE provider or an international institution. The process set out below ensures that the credit or award gained is taken into consideration in relation to the course requirements and the higher education qualifications framework.

2.3 RPEL: Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)

An application may exceptionally be considered for exemption from modules on a small number of postgraduate taught courses at the University, based on evidence of learning which may have been formally assessed through professional development or employment-based awards, but did not result in credit or award being made by a UK Higher Education degree-awarding body, in accordance with the relevant higher education qualifications framework. The process set out below ensures that the level of the learning gained through experience, rather than the experience itself, is considered in relation to the course requirements. and the higher education qualifications framework.

2.4 Advanced Standing

Advanced Standing is the term used to record credit on a student record which has resulted from Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL) or Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL).

3. Applications for undergraduate courses

3.1 Application process

Prospective students may make an application for stage 2 via UCAS for Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL) based on 120 credits (or equivalent) previously achieved in stage 1 of a course at another institution. A prospective student may apply to stage 1 where they do not meet the course entry requirements but have completed a Foundation Year at another institution.

Applications for exemption from stage 2 or above or for part of stage 1 or stage 0 will not be considered. The procedure set out below must be followed to ensure equity in the consideration of applications, that the course aims remain achievable and to ensure that academic standards are maintained.

Applications are considered firstly by the School in accordance with the criteria set out below and secondly by Admissions to ensure that the course entry requirements are met (including the achievement of grades in study prior to stage 1 that are in line with the course offer level). School recommendations will be made to Admissions for sign off. Application decisions must be completed in advance of the start of the course and reported to the School Education Committee.

In recommending an application for exemption from stage 1, the School must consider the following:

- (i) Credit volume and level requirement: The School must ensure that 120 credits have previously been achieved (including 90 credits at level 4). The School must ensure that the student registers for the required credit volume at the University following the approval of an application for exemption.
- (ii) The course requirements: the School must ensure that the prior learning undertaken will enable the student to engage with stage 2 of the course and to achieve the degree aims. A mapping process should be carried out to ensure that the prior learning undertaken enables the learning outcomes of the exempted core modules to be met, where this is appropriate
- (iii) Timeframe requirements: A University award must be made based on credit and learning achieved within a reasonable timeframe. Credit achieved within 5 years of the start of the new course may be considered.

The procedure set out above may also be followed to consider an application to stage 1 with RPCL based on 120 credits (or equivalent) previously achieved at Level 3 in a Foundation Year at another institution. (Prospective students who do not achieve 120 Level 3 credits in a Foundation Year at another institution may apply via UCAS for a Foundation Year at the University of Sussex, or to stage 1 of a course where they have met the course entry requirements.)

Some disciplines and/or Professional and/or Statutory Bodies (PSBs) will not permit Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning.

This policy does not apply to validated awards at partner institutions.

Where an agreement is in place with a partner institution to allow direct entry into stage 2 of an associated course/s, the procedures set out here do not apply.

For accepted applications, SSRO will record Advanced Standing on the candidate record. Marks achieved on credit imported will not be recorded on the candidate record or the University transcript and will not contribute to progression/award.

3.2 Applications following permanent withdrawal or departure with an exit award

No application may be made for exemption from part of stage 1 or stage 0 of an undergraduate course.

A candidate may not apply for re-entry to the University until after three years have elapsed in cases where they have been disqualified from the University for academic misconduct.

In accordance with Admissions policy, students returning to the University following permanent withdrawal will not be entitled to apply for University accommodation.

The current terms and conditions will apply upon return to the University.

All candidates applying to return to the University must complete a Criminal Convictions declaration. In addition, all candidates must include in the personal statement a summary of what has changed to indicate how they will achieve the degree aims on this occasion. For example, a candidate applying to return after health related issues should provide confirmation from a medical practitioner that their circumstances would not inhibit them from engaging with study. All students returning to study at the University will be asked to sign a Learning Agreement.

Any application to restart a stage where the candidate has already had two academic years to complete the stage of study will be subject to approval by the Director for the Student Experience (or nominee). Such applications can be approved based on evidence that the candidate's circumstances have improved, for example, recovery following health issues.

(i) Application for readmission with recognition of Prior Certificated Learning

An application for readmission to stage 2 of the same course or a new course title after a period of Permanent Withdrawal, or departure with an exit award, should be made to Student Systems and Records Office (SSRO) where a student has completed and passed stage 1. An application for readmission to stage 1 may be made where the student has passed the foundation year. An application for readmission to stage 3 may exceptionally be considered. Only applications for a full stage of study will be considered. (An application for readmission to repeat a stage that has been passed will not normally be considered). The application will be considered by the School in accordance with the criteria set out above in 3.1.(i), (ii) and (iii). Recommendations from the School will be subject to sign off by Admissions to ensure that the current course entry requirements are met and to arrange for the course registration fee to be raised for the remaining stages of study. SSRO will confirm the decision on the application to the student. SSRO will reinstate the modules previously taken on the candidate record.

Where the application is not accepted, the student may apply via a UCAS application to Admissions. In these circumstances, marks from credits already achieved will not be retained for progression/award purposes upon return. Where an application is accepted, the student must rescind any previous exit award made. Marks achieved prior to permanent withdrawal on modules that are reinstated will be used for progression/award.

(ii) Application for readmission without Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning

An application for readmission to start in stage 1 (or stage 0) of the same course or a new course title after a period of Permanent Withdrawal, or departure with an exit award, should be made via UCAS to Admissions, where a student did not complete and pass stage 1 (or stage 0) or the applicant does not wish to import credits achieved previously. In these circumstances, marks from credits already achieved will not be retained for progression/award purposes upon return. The application will be considered by the School in accordance with the standard admissions process.

3.3 Confirmation of outcome of application

Decisions are made via a two stage process as set out in 3.1. Decisions are based on academic judgement.

The outcome of an application must be provided in writing in advance of the start of the course. The University will inform the applicant of the decision and arrange for the course tuition fee to be raised in all cases.

There will be no appeal against a decision to not accept an application for exemption, as such decisions are based on academic judgement.

A fraudulent application for recognition of Prior Certificated Learning will be considered in accordance with the University's Admissions policy.

4. Applications for postgraduate courses

4.1 Application process

Prospective students may make an application to PG Admissions for Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning, (RPCL), based on credits previously achieved or Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL), based on experience or professional/employer based awards. Applications may only be considered for the following postgraduate courses: MA Education (part-time only); MA English Language Teaching; PG Dip Psychological Therapy, MSc Psychological Therapy and Online Distance Learning Courses. The procedure set out below must be followed to ensure equity in the consideration of applications, that the course aims remain achievable and to ensure that academic standards are maintained.

Applications are considered firstly by the School, in accordance with the criteria set out below, and secondly by Admissions to ensure that the course entry requirements are met. School recommendations will be made to Admissions for sign off. Application decisions must be completed in advance of the start of the course and reported to the School Education Committee.

In recommending an application for RPCL, the School must consider the following:

- (i) Credit volume requirement: The School must ensure that the student registers for the required credit volume at the University following the approval of an application for exemption. No exemption will be granted for part of the module credit weighting. Applications for exemption may be considered as follows for credit achieved at another HE provider:

- A maximum of 50% of the credits required for the new course may be imported from another HE provider (for example 90 level 7 credits not used for a previous award may be imported to a masters)
- credit achieved on a dissertation/project may not be imported
- a maximum of 50% of the credit previously used for an award may be imported, subject to a maximum of 50% of the credits required for the award being imported (for example 60 level 7 credits used for a PG Dip may be imported to a masters)
- Marks achieved on credit imported will not be recorded on the student record or the University transcript and will not contribute to classification. .

(ii) Credit level requirement: The School must ensure that any exemption recommended is based on evidence of prior learning at the level of the exempted module/s.

(iii) The course requirements: the School must ensure that the prior learning undertaken will enable the student to engage with the course and to achieve the degree aims. A mapping process should be carried out to ensure that the prior learning undertaken enables the learning outcomes of the exempted core modules to be met, where this is appropriate.

(iv) Timeframe requirements: A University award must be made based on credit and learning achieved within a reasonable timeframe. Credit achieved within 5 years of the start of the new course may be considered. In cases where credit from a previous award is being considered, only credit achieved within 5 years of the start of the course may be considered.

For accepted applications for exemption from a module/s, SSRO will record Advanced Standing on the candidate record.

For RPEL applications, the procedure set out in 4.2 must also be followed.

4.2 Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) applications

In relation to applications for RPEL the Schools must ensure that an appropriate assessment is used to assess the prior learning achieved, rather than the experience itself, and to assess how the learning achieved relates to the modules to be exempted. For example, an appropriate assessment could include a portfolio of evidence to demonstrate the learning achieved, a reflective account, a set assessment task and/or a structured interview.

Schools must provide clear information on the assessment in a timely manner and must provide subject specific guidance where appropriate, for example, on portfolio preparation and any independent verification of evidence that is required.

Schools must provide information on how prior learning will be judged in advance of the assessment including the marking criteria that will be used.

The applicant must demonstrate evidence in relation to the learning claimed. There must be sufficient evidence to indicate that the learning is relevant and that it relates to the applicant's own achievements. Evidence should also be provided in relation to the timeframe over which the learning has been achieved. The evidence must verify that the prior learning is appropriate in relation to the modules to be exempted in terms of credit volume and level of learning outcomes.

In summary, the evidence provided by the applicant must satisfy the following criteria which must be taken into consideration in addition to the criteria set out in 4.1 above:

- (i) **Relevance:** evidence must be provided that the prior learning that is being claimed is relevant to the modules to be exempted and/or course. The applicant must demonstrate a match in both level and learning achieved in relation to the module/s for which they are seeking exemption.
- (ii) **Sufficiency:** applicants must provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate they have achieved the learning claimed.
- (iii) **Authenticity:** applicants must provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the learning claimed relates to their own efforts and achievements.
- (iv) **Currency:** A University award must be made based on learning achieved within a reasonable timeframe. Prior learning achieved within 5 years of the start of the course may be considered.

Feedback should be provided by the School in relation to all RPEL applications for exemption, whether accepted or rejected. Where an application has been accepted, feedback is intended to support the student with 'feed-forward' to future assessments. Where an application has been rejected, feedback is intended to support the applicant in understanding the reasons for rejection in relation to any future study.

SSRO will record Advanced Standing on the candidate record.

4.3 CPD applications

A candidate may apply to register on individual modules on a stand-alone basis, where this is standard practice for the discipline, and has been approved by the University. The maximum registration period on a stand-alone module is one academic year. Registration on a dissertation on a stand-alone basis is not permitted, as the student must register on the masters course.

The process set out below should be followed to ensure that the modules taken at the University form part of the validated course structure, or can be mapped to the validated module learning outcomes. Modules taken at other institutions may not be considered.

Applications for courses are considered firstly by the School, in accordance with the criteria set out below, and secondly by Admissions to ensure that the course entry requirements are met. School recommendations will be made to Admissions for sign off. Application decisions will be reported to the School Education Committee.

In reviewing an application for exemption based on modules previously taken, the School must consider the following:

- (i) **Credit volume requirement:** The School must ensure that the student registers for the required credit volume following the approval of an application for exemption. No exemption will be granted for part of the module credit weighting. Applications for exemption must be considered as follows:
 - credit achieved on a dissertation/project may not be imported
 - a maximum of 50% of the credit previously used for an award at the University may be imported (for example 60 level 7 credits used for a PG Dip may be imported to a masters).

- Alternatively, a previous award may be rescinded in order that all the credits are used towards the new award (for example, a PG Dip may be rescinded and all the credits imported to a masters providing the criteria are met)
- Marks achieved on credit imported will be used for classification, provided they have not been used towards another award at the University

(ii) Credit level requirement: The School must ensure that any exemption recommended is based on evidence of prior learning at the level of the exempted module/s.

(iii) The course requirements: the School must ensure that the prior learning undertaken will enable the student to engage with the course and to achieve the degree aims. A mapping process should be carried out to ensure that the prior learning undertaken enables the learning outcomes of the exempted core modules to be met, where this is appropriate.

(iv) Timeframe requirement: CPD modules achieved within the last 5 years may be considered. A student must register on an award once 60 credits that form part of the course structure have been achieved (PG Cert, PG Dip or masters). Candidates may apply to transfer from one award to the next prior to the award being made in order that all the credits achieved can be considered for the new award.

Once registered on the award the following timelines apply:

- PG Cert – award made simultaneously upon registration once 60 credits achieved (student may not be registered before award is made)
- PG Dip – maximum period of registration on the award is five years and the award must be made within 7 years from when the first imported module was taken
- Masters - maximum period of registration on the award is two years and the award must be made within 8 years from when the first imported module was taken

The Progression and Award Board may make a recommendation for an Absurd Outcome for an award to be made where these timeframes have been exceeded.

Applications for exemption must be completed in advance of the start of the course. For accepted applications for exemption from a module/s, Advanced Standing will be recorded on the record where the module has already been used towards an award at the University. Where the module has not been used towards an award, the module and mark achieved will be added to the new course record.

4.4 Application following permanent withdrawal and departure with an award

A candidate may not apply for re-entry to the University until after three years have elapsed in cases where they have been disqualified from the University for academic misconduct.

In accordance with Admissions policy, students returning to the University following permanent withdrawal or departure with an award will not be entitled to apply for University accommodation.

The current terms and conditions will apply upon return to the University

All candidates applying to return to the University must complete a Criminal Convictions declaration. In addition, all candidates must include in the personal statement a summary of what has changed to indicate how they will achieve the degree aims on this occasion. For example, a candidate applying to return after health related issues should provide confirmation from a medical practitioner that their circumstances would not inhibit them from engaging with study'. All students returning to study at the University will be asked to sign a Learning Agreement.

An application will not normally be accepted where a candidate has already had two academic years to complete a course. Such applications can be approved by the Director for the Student Experience (or nominee), based on evidence that the candidate's circumstances have improved, for example, recovery following health issues.

(i) Application for readmission with Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning

An application may be made for readmission to the same course or a new course title after a period of permanent withdrawal or departure with an award. Applications should be made to Student Systems and Records Office (SSRO) in cases where credits have previously been achieved on a postgraduate course at the University. The application will be considered by the School in accordance with the criteria set out above in 4.1(ii), (iii) and (iv).

Recommendations from the School will be subject to sign off by Admissions to ensure that the current course entry requirements are met. SSRO will confirm the decision on the application and the course tuition fee to the student.

In relation to credit achieved at the University, the following criteria apply:

- There is no maximum number of credits that may be imported to the new course, provided the credits have not been used towards an award (for example 120 level 7 credits may be imported to a masters)
- credit achieved on a dissertation/project may not be imported
- a maximum of 50% of the credit previously used for an award may be imported, (for example 60 level 7 credits used for a PG Dip may be imported to a masters). Alternatively, a student may rescind a previous award made in order that all the taught credits may be used towards the masters.
- Marks achieved on module/s that are imported to the new award will be used for classification, provided the credits have not already been used for an award

Where the application is not accepted, the student may apply via a PG application to Admissions. In these circumstances, marks from credits already achieved will not be retained for award purposes upon return and the candidate will be asked to rescind any exit award previously given.

Where an application is accepted, the student must rescind any previous exit award made, where appropriate, in order that marks previously achieved may be used for the new award. SSRO will record Advanced Standing where marks have been used towards an award that is not being rescinded.

(ii) Application for readmission without Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning

An application for readmission to the same course, or a new course title after a period of permanent withdrawal, or departure with an award, should be made to PG Admissions

where credits have not previously been achieved on a postgraduate course at the University, where an application for readmission with Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning has not been accepted or the applicant does not wish to import credits achieved previously. In these circumstances, marks from credits already achieved will not be retained for award purposes upon return. The application will be considered by the School in accordance with the standard admissions process.

4.5 Confirmation of outcome of application

Decisions are made via a two stage process as set out in 4.1. Decisions are based on academic judgement.

The outcome of an application must be provided in writing in advance of the start of the course. The University will inform the applicant of the decision and arrange for the course tuition fee to be raised in all cases.

There will be no appeal against a decision to not accept an application for exemption, as such decisions are based on academic judgement.

A fraudulent application for Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning will be considered in accordance with the University's Admissions policy.

5. Visiting and Exchange applications

Visiting and Exchange students are registered on modules at the University, not an award bearing course. Students may apply for admission to a course with Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning. Applications must be made via the Student Systems and Records Office (SSRO), not via a UCAS or PG Admissions. The application will be considered by the School in accordance with the criteria set out in 3.1 for an undergraduate course and 4.1 for a postgraduate course. This is to ensure that the modules taken form part of the validated course structure, or that the learning outcomes of the modules previously taken can be mapped to the module learning outcomes of the missed core modules, to enable the course learning outcomes to be achieved.

Admissions will review and approve the application, to ensure that the course entry requirements have been met. SSRO will confirm the decision on the application and the course tuition fee to the student. Where an application is not accepted, the student may apply via the standard application process. In these circumstances, marks already achieved on the modules will not be retained for progression/award purposes.

6. MPharm Pharmacy students

Students in stage 4 of the final cohort of the MPharm Pharmacy course who fail PHA408 Advanced Pharmaceutical Care Practice – Preparing for Practice, may apply to the University of Brighton to repeat the module during the next academic year. Where the module is passed at the University of Brighton, the marks and credit achieved on the module will be imported and the candidate reconsidered for award by the University of Sussex School Progression and Award Board.

Summary of approval route

Categories	Via Admissions	Via SSRO	comment
External UG with 120 credits in year 0 (level 3)	yes	no	See section 3.1
External UG with 120 credits in stage 1	yes	no	See section 3.1
External UG with fewer than 120 credits in stage 1 (or stage 0)	no	no	RPL can only be considered where the credits for the stage have been achieved
UG PWD return with 120 credits in stage 1/0	no	yes	See section 3.2(i)
UG PWD return without 120 credits in stage 1/0	yes	no	See section 3.2(ii)
External PG RPEL or RPCL (designated awards)	yes	no	See section 4.1, 4.2
CPD credit from University of Sussex	yes	no	See section 4.3
PG PWD with RPL	no	yes	See section 4.4(i)
PG PWD without RPL	yes	no	See section 4.4(ii)

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