Recognition of Prior (Experiential) Learning and Credit Transfer Handbook

Relevant to:	All LJMU Staff
Responsibility for Document Review:	Academic Registry
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RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

- UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Advice and Guidance: Assessment

RELATED POLICIES & DOCUMENTS

- Academic Framework Regulations
- RP(E)L Policy

Recognition of Prior (Experiential) Learning and Credit Transfer

RP(E)L Policy can be found at
https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/about-us/public-information/academic-quality-and-regulations/academic-policy

RP(E)L Process Guidance

1.   Matching prior learning to programmes of study requires an assessment of the degree of match between an individual's learning and either:

     I.   entry criteria and requirements *and/or*
     II.   programme and level learning outcomes *and/or*
    III.   individual module learning outcomes.

1.2   Evidence of general experience and learning at an equivalent level may be deemed sufficient to enable entry or accelerated entry, but pre-requisite knowledge in some key areas may be deemed essential for some award programmes.

2.   **Questions that programme teams need to address, particularly in relation to entry to programmes via credit transfer/RP(E)L**

- what skills/competences are required at each level of a programme in order to ensure satisfactory progression?
- what forms of learning, teaching and assessment are encountered at each level of a programme?
- which areas of the curriculum/modules are strictly necessary at each level in order to ensure satisfactory progression either to core or to optional modules at subsequent levels?
- which areas of curriculum study are compulsory?
- what forms of work or other experiential learning, such as unpaid or voluntary work, might be deemed equivalent to compulsory study in a programme?
- what are the learning outcomes at each programme level and how can experiential learning relate to these?

3.   **What procedures do students and staff have to follow for credit transfer/ RP(E)L to be claimed? (please see Appendix A for an overview)?**

3.1   **Initial enquiries by students or applicants**

Applicants making enquiries about RP(E)L should be directed to the relevant programme leader. Applicants, making enquiries about claims for prior experiential learning, or where there is doubt about the possibility of credit transfer or the recognition of certificated learning, should be given preliminary information about the principle, policy, and procedure.

Consideration of claims from applicants for credit for prior learning is managed at the Faculty level. It is a requirement of the Academic Framework regulations that Faculty Recognition Groups (FRG) determine whether credit is to be awarded in respect of prior learning.

3.1.1   Applications for internal transfer within an academic year will only be considered if they are received prior to the University's module registration deadline.

3.2   Credit transfer

3.3   Where the applicant has obtained credit from a UK institution Programme Leaders will consider the credit using the criteria listed in the principles section in the policy. Provided the applicant is able to supply verifiable evidence of the credits, the credits would be transferred on admission to the programme at LJMU and recorded on the student's record. It is important that the original certificate/transcript is seen and a copy taken.

3.4   Where an articulated progression route (such as from a LJMU-validated Foundation Degree to level 6 of a programme delivered within LJMU) has been agreed it is not necessary for the student to apply for credit transfer/RPL on the LJMU programme. It is the student's right to continue with their study provided that they have met the progression criteria. A record of such students and their credit transfer must be kept and reported to the Faculty Recognition Group.

3.5   Internal transfers within LJMU are not allowed for students who are 'trailing credits', i.e. where a student has not obtained 120 credits for the level that they are currently enrolled on.

3.6   All transferred credit is reported to the Board of Examiners.

3.7   Recognition of prior certificated learning (RPL)

3.8   Where applicants apply with qualifications that are not recognised by the UK FHEQ, the Faculty Recognition Group will consider the application and if it is agreed to accept the qualifications the credit awarded is designated as RPL. Where an individual claim for advanced standing relates to a recognised qualification (e.g. HND), equivalence may be determined by verification of level, volume and content of learning, otherwise a mapping of learning outcomes will be required. If there is any doubt about the authenticity, currency or any other criteria relevant to the credit transfer, or where it is not possible to transfer credit because of incompatible credit ratings, the RP(E)L claim form must be submitted as early as possible.

3.8.1   Such a claim must be based on recent learning with clear equivalence to the learning outcomes of the proposed award programme. Normally, five years is the upper limit allowable for qualifications obtained previously to remain current, without any other recent relevant experience. Subject areas differ and each application for RP(E)L can vary and should, therefore, be considered on its individual merits.

3.9   Admissions staff are able to give conditional offers to applicants, which will give direct entry to places at level 5 or level 6, on the basis of gaining a qualification which will satisfy the level 4 and level 5 requirements.

3.10   There is no fee charged for considering RP(E)L claims.

3.11   If there is any doubt about the authenticity, currency or any other criteria relevant to the claim, the Admissions staff will consult with the Programme Leader and Faculty Registrar.

3.12   The FRG shall meet at times that are designed to expedite this process, but at least once per semester.

3.13 Credit awarded by RPL is reported to the Board of Examiners.

4. Submitting claims for uncertificated learning (RPEL)

4.1 The applicant is referred to the Faculty Registrar who refers him/her to the appropriate Programme Leader.

4.2 With the guidance of the Programme Leader, the applicant produces evidence for the claim usually in the form of a suitable portfolio and mapping document.

The portfolio should consist of material that clearly shows how the student's experience has led to evidenced learning at the appropriate level. It is likely to consist of the following sections:

- a description of experiences;
- an account of the learning that has resulted;
- a list of demonstrable learning outcomes;
- evidence of having achieved those outcomes;
- and details of the claim made.

4.3 Assessment of claims for uncertificated learning (RPEL)

4.3.1 The programme leader arranges for the claim to be assessed by an Academic Assessor, who has not been directly involved in advising the applicant on the claim.

4.3.2 Where direct or indirect evidence of learning is in doubt, the Academic Assessor may arrange for a challenge assessment to be undertaken. For claims of this nature moderation will include the programme's external examiner.

4.3.3 Assessors will recommend both the amount of credit to be awarded and the level of that credit (see 11.6) to the Programme Leader who submits a summary of the claim and recommendations to the FRG for approval.

4.3.4 The Secretary of the FRG will then ensure that the applicant is informed in writing of the decision and that the applicant's record is updated.

4.3.5 The award of credit from uncertificated prior learning is reported to the Board of Examiners.

4.4 Claims for credit involving combinations of certificated and uncertificated learning

These will be processed by the programme leader as for claims for uncertificated learning.

5. The avoidance of double counting

In some cases, claims for uncertificated learning may, in effect, be for learning which has already been credited through credit transfer or certificated learning. For example, an engineering applicant gaining entry to level 5 may seek additional credit for learning resulting from work-based experience occurring whilst undertaking HNC studies, which has already gained credit. If the learning outcomes for the claim are equivalent to those in the level 4 modules already credited, then the claim should be denied as this would

represent double-counting of the same learning.

Another example would be where credit is used to gain admission to the start of a programme, for instance, learning that indicates graduate equivalence for entry onto a postgraduate programme, which is also used to claim credit for learning on the new programme. This possibility occurs regularly with post-experience students gaining entry to a postgraduate programme.

The principle of progression in award should underpin the re-use of credit, in which new learning should normally be at a higher level than any credit gained from prior learning.

6. Status of credit

The amount of transferred credit / RP(E)L that may contribute to an award is specified in the University's Academic Framework, see https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/about-us/public-information/academic-quality-and- regulations/academic-framework.

7. RP(E)L and Collaborative Partners

7.1 All programmes leading to LJMU awards delivered through partner institutions, whether UK, EU or international, must agree at validation or review, a procedure for the award of credit via RP(E)L.

7.2 This would normally require the partner institution to send claims to a relevant LJMU FRG. If an institution wishes to operate its own accreditation committee this must be explicitly agreed at validation / review. The arrangements should include the reporting process.

7.3 In considering claims for credit transfer/RP(E)L in relation to partner provision the Linktutor should advise on the process and on the academic suitability of claims.

7.4 LJMU policy and procedures regarding RP(E)L must be followed. This includes reports to the Board of Examiners and Faculty Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committees.

7.5 The students' records, following any credit transfer or award of credit from RP(E)L, will be updated on LJMU's student record system by LJMU staff.

8.0 Appeals

Applicants who are dissatisfied with the handling of their credit transfer and/or RP(E)L claims should raise their concerns with the relevant Admissions Officer. If the matter is not resolved informally, applicants should then be advised to use the University's admissions appeals procedure.

9. Update of the Student Record System and Reporting

Credit transfer and/or RP(E)L credit however awarded must be added onto the student record system. Usually this will be completed as part of the admissions process. Where credits are transferred from one LJMU programme to another LJMU programme, those modules that are common to both old and new programmes will appear on the student's record as taught modules with all the details of the student's attempt at the module retained. Where a student is given credit transfer for a module or modules that are not included in the new programme, this credit will have to be entered on the student's record as a block of credit transfer. This is done through the credit transfer screens where credit can be applied for complete levels, blocks of modules or to specific modules.

9.1 Once the record has been updated, the applicant should be informed in writing of the outcome of his/her claim.

9.2 Exceptionally, claims for credit for prior learning may be approved by the Chair of the FRG. At least two members of the FRG shall consider and agree such claims. All such exceptional approvals must be listed specifically in the report to the Faculty Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee.

9.3 All RP(E)L credit, however awarded, is reported to the Board of Examiners and the Faculty Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee.

10. Guidance notes on the role of the RPEL Advisor regarding experiential learning claims.

10.1 Applicants who believe they possess learning of an appropriate level are invited to present a proposal detailing that learning and supporting it with evidence.

10.2 It needs to be stressed that the Programme Leader needs to be both willing and able to commit sufficient time and personal development in order to give students a realistic opportunity to put together claims for credit for prior learning.

10.3 It is always learning that is being assessed rather than experience, since the two are not always linked. Just as experience does not always lead to significant learning, so learning can take place independently of significant experience.

10.4 The onus is on the applicant to demonstrate that learning (with appropriate advice).

10.5 An applicant must be able to demonstrate that s/he has achieved the outcomes to the same pass criteria as others who have taken the module by more conventional means. (e.g. to a pass level of 40%).

10.6 There can be not a prescribed format or length for a proposal, but generally it should be kept as brief as possible. Sometimes the student will need to engage in substantial fresh writing in the form of a dissertation; more often a brief paper to explain the context of material submitted will suffice.

10.7 In LJMU, the most commonly used format is that of the portfolio. The portfolio is likely to consist of a collection of clearly progressing sections which demonstrate the logical connection between experience and demonstrable learning. Since the LJMU Academic

Framework is based on the achievement of learning outcomes, the claim for credit in the portfolio would be based on evidenced achievement of learning outcomes.

10.8 A typical portfolio will have the following sections:

Introduction	Setting the context of the claim in the overall academic and career plans of the student;
Experience	Usually an expansion on a curriculum vitae or other significant life events;
Learning Account	Reflections on what has been learned from the experience;
Learning Outcomes	Clear statements of demonstrable behavioural change/performance resulting from the learning;
Evidence	Evidence needs to be presented for the achievement of each learning outcome;
A Claim	This needs to be realistic, based on sound advice. It is not wise to ask for more than is realistic in order to initiate negotiations with the assessor.

11. Guidance notes on the role of the RPEL Academic Assessor

11.1 Experts from appropriate sections of the University will be invited to carry out assessment of claims for the recognition of prior experiential learning.

11.2 In some claims, more than one Assessor may collaborate in assessing a claim.

11.3 The Assessors will study the material produced for the claim, may interview the student and may also require any further evidence they deem necessary. This might include a presentation or performance, or even (as a last resort) an unseen examination.

11.4 Assessors may find it helpful to consider the following criteria. These are a useful guide to the necessary academic rigour:

Authenticity	that the applicant really did what is claimed in the proposal. Is the evidence clearly related to the applicant's own efforts and achievements? Is the evidence valid and reliable?
Acceptability	that the focus of learning was sharp rather than diffuse; that the learning was not isolated from wider considerations; that there is an appropriate match between the evidence presented and the learning being demonstrated.
Quality and Sufficiency	that the learning had reached an acceptable academic level. Is there sufficient evidence to demonstrate fully the achievement of the learning claimed?
Currency	that the applicant has kept up to date with recent developments.

Does the evidence relate to current learning?

11.5 It is a firm principle that Assessors should act independently of the Advisor. Staff who help applicants prepare their evidence should not have any part in making academic judgements about that evidence. This is to avoid confusion between the roles of advocate and judge.

11.6 The Assessors will recommend both the amount of credit to be awarded and the level of that credit. In making this judgement they will apply their knowledge of the normal workload and level of performance of students in their subject area. In other words, Assessors should not apply more stringent criteria to RPEL assessment than to other assessments.

11.7 Where Assessors are unable to recommend credit it is important that they are supportive to applicants who have taken the risk of presenting a portion of their life's work for assessment. Assessors would be wiser to state that they were not satisfied that the claim had been substantiated rather than that the learning was not worthy of credit. After all, the claim may be based on an important part of the applicant's experience and out-of-hand rejection could have damaging consequences.

11.8 Recommendations as to the award of credit (or otherwise) should be put to the Faculty Recognition Group via the Programme Leader. The recommendation should relate to the amount and level of credit. Where specific credit is recommended the name and code of the module should be indicated. Brief justification for the recommendation should be given.

12. Reference

UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Assessment
https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/assessment

RPL/Credit Transfer process flow