

UCO Policy and Procedure

HE Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and Procedure

Reference Code: UCOQH-PI026

Version No: 1.4

Issue Date: September 2026

Date for Review: August 2028

1. Purpose and Scope

This policy and procedure will be of interest to staff, students and applicants wishing to make applications for accelerated entry onto, or within, a programme of study in higher education delivered at the Oldham College higher education campus, University Campus Oldham (UCO). The purpose of this policy is to ensure consistency of practice and adherence to the requirements of our partners and has been written with regard to the codes and regulations as defined by the following awarding bodies.

- i. Pearson [Quality assurance for BTEC Higher Nationals | Pearson qualifications](#)
- ii. Sheffield Hallam University [Recognition of Prior Learning | Sheffield Hallam University \(shu.ac.uk\)](#)
- iii. University of Lancashire [Accreditation of Prior Learning - UCLan](#)
- iv. University of Huddersfield [Graduate School - University of Huddersfield](#)

Excluding Pearson programmes, the final arbiter of any RPL application will be the awarding body. Appeals can be made to Pearson in relation to an RPL outcome undertaken by UCO.

2. Definitions

Academic Credit	Academic Credit is awarded to a student in recognition of the verified achievement of specific learning outcomes at a specified academic level
Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	The demonstration, assessment and formal recognition of specific learning outcomes at a specified academic level. The academic level denotes the intellection demand and the amount of credit denotes the volume of learning.
Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL)	Prior certificated learning where a student has passed courses that bear UK Higher Education credit is considered and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes, sometimes with an award of academic credit.

Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)	Learning achieved outside of formal education or training is assessed and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes, sometimes with an award of academic credit.
Advanced Standing/Direct Entry	Where an RPL claim is made successfully for a substantial volume of academic credit allowing direct entry to a named award at an intermediate level e.g. entering an undergraduate programme at FHEQ level 5 or level 6 instead of level 4
Admission with credit	Commencement of a programme of study having successfully entered an RPL claim resulting in the award of academic credit toward a named award that amounts to less than a full academic year of credit.

The term Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a process used in higher education to recognise, and when appropriate, award module credit for learning undertaken before admission onto a course. Students can claim for modules to be awarded towards their course based on previous academic, professional, vocational, or experiential learning.

There are two broad categories of prior learning recognised by the UCO:

2.1 Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL)

RPCL refers to prior certificated learning where a student has passed courses that bear UK Higher Education credit and may be recognised by Academic Credit Transfer.

The following types of prior learning are recognised:

- study at UK Higher Education institutions;
- credit or qualifications from non-UK Higher Education institutions;
- credit from qualifications on the Ofqual Register of Recognised Qualifications and qualifications on the database of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework;
- other certificated learning (such as professional qualifications) at Higher Education level (see 5.2);
- study at a university overseas.

RPCL also refers to previous learning that would meet the requirements of HE-level study but UK HE credit or Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) credit has not been awarded.

2.2 Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)

RPEL is the identification, assessment and formal acknowledgement of learning and achievement gained outside formal education or training that is not usually certificated but is considered and recognised by the College RPL Panel for:

- admission to a programme at the named point of entry;
- exemption against specific modules;
- advanced standing.

Prior Experiential Learning may have taken place in a variety of contexts including:

- Higher Education programmes;
- work situations (paid and voluntary);

- training courses in formal (e.g. further education colleges) and informal settings, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and web-based CPD;
- more generally, through a variety of life experiences.

3. Principles

This policy and procedure will be applied fairly and consistently and outcomes will be monitored and reviewed annually at the HE Curriculum, Quality and Standards Committee. The following principles will be applied:

- RPL can be used towards the requirements of a named award up two-thirds¹ of the total credit requirements for that award, 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 process and outcomes will be transparent, 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 the awarding partner through the accreditation process.
- RPL can only be considered against levels 4 and 5 study.
- RPL claims can be made against single modules to a maximum of 50% of a level, or against a whole level.
- 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.
- All decisions will be subject to the College's processes for internal and external moderation and external examining.
- 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.

4. Procedure for applying for RPL

Applicants should first discuss their application with their Course Leader who will be able to offer advice and support in preparing the application for RPL in accordance with the relevant awarding body.

Students/applicants wishing to apply for RPL towards qualifications awarded by Pearson or the Open University should complete the UCO Application Form.

¹ two-thirds of RPL is only permitted for full, three-year bachelor's degrees (360 credits) or full Masters degrees (a minimum of 180 credits) and not sub-awards, where the usual maximum is 50%.

The Course Leader should establish whether learning as a result of the applicant's experience matches the learning outcomes of the unit(s) or module(s) for which credit is being claimed and is current. The findings should be recorded in Section Two of the application form before being submitted to the RPL Panel for consideration.

The paperwork and procedure for the relevant Higher Education Institution should be used for all other courses.

All completed paperwork, along with supplementary evidence, should be submitted to the HE Student Services Office. All applications for RPL will be recorded and tracked and paperwork uploaded to the students EBS Record.

5. Criteria for Assessing Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Decisions regarding RPL are a matter of academic judgement and, for Pearson and Open University courses are undertaken by the UCO RPL Panel who have been delegated this authority by the HE Assessment Board.

5.1 Membership of the RPL Panel

The RPL Panel will consist of the Chair of the Assessment Board and the Course Leader(s) concerned (i.e. for each course for which there is an RPL application) and a Secretary to coordinate the process and ensure that there is a formal record of the meeting. Meetings may be conducted virtually where necessary to facilitate timely decision-making. Prompt consideration of applications is particularly important for applicants wishing to seek exemption from a whole level of study as part of the admissions process, and therefore it may be necessary to have more frequent RPL Panel meetings at the start of the academic year to accommodate this.

5.2 Criteria for Assessing Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL)

Where an applicant has certificated learning that is at a lower level than the requirements for a particular programme of study, a decision to allow the applicant to join a programme *at the normal entry point* is made by judging the relevance of their learning in terms of whether it meets - or contributes to meeting - the entry requirements of the programme.

An applicant's certificated learning may also be judged as to its relevance in exempting an applicant from individual modules or a stage of study. A decision to accept credits gained elsewhere as *counting towards credit accumulation for the programme of study* can be made where an individual has completed the same module (or a complete course) that bears UK Higher Education credit.

To apply for RPCL, applicants must provide the College RPL Panel with original, official evidence of previous study. Evidence received via email or photocopy will not be accepted. If the applicant is unable to bring original documents to the HE Student Services Office, the College RPL Panel can accept formally verified copies made by a solicitor. Credits will only be awarded for periods of study that have been formally assessed and successfully completed. Credit will not be awarded for any compensated/condoned passes.

If the applicant's prior learning is not certificated, the College RPL Panel will assess the applicant's learning directly, either by requiring the applicant to take the normal progression assessments of the programme or by some other appropriate form of assessment.

5.3 Criteria for assessing Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)

A decision to *exempt an applicant from one or more individual modules within the programme of study* can also be made on the basis that the applicant has demonstrated achievement of the learning outcomes from the module through Experiential Learning. In assessing applications for RPEL, the College RPL Panel evaluates the application's:

- **Level:** The evidence that is presented and the learning that is claimed must be at the appropriate level.
- **Relevance:** There should be an appropriate match between the evidence of prior learning and the applicant's intended course.
- **Sufficiency:** The evidence submitted should demonstrate the achievement of the learning claimed and be sufficient to cover the learning outcomes of the module(s) on the intended course.
- **Currency:** The evidence should relate to current learning. This would normally be judged as learning that has been completed within 5 years of the claim.
- **Authenticity:** The evidence of prior learning should accurately and unambiguously uphold the applicant's achievements.

6. Recognition of Prior Learning Decisions

All RPL Panel decisions are communicated to the applicant within two weeks of the Panel meeting. If an RPL is rejected, the applicant will be informed in writing by the Chair of the RPL Panel and the applicant will be referred back to the Course Leader to determine a way forward with the application.

Once RPL has been approved the HE Student Services Team will liaise with MIS to ensure the correct number of recognised academic credits are recorded on the student's achievement record and linked correctly to the intended final award outcome to ensure a full student profile is available for consideration at Assessment Boards.

7. Recognition of Prior Learning Applicant Appeals Procedure

In order to safeguard the interests of applicants, the College has established a procedure for use when an applicant believes that their application has not been dealt with in accordance with the College's policies, principles and procedures. An applicant who wishes to lodge an appeal should refer to the Admissions Appeals procedure.

8. Recognition of Prior Learning Record

Details of a student's RPL are recorded in their electronic student record and on the diploma supplement (also known as a transcript) included with the qualification certificate.

Version History:

Issue	Changes	Author	Approved at	Date of Issue
1	Policy Implemented	Head of HE Quality and Registry	QIC / C&Q	March 2020
1.1	Minor amendments to include Section 2.1 and Section 3	HE Head of Quality and Registry	QIC	April 2020
1.2	Scheduled review – no changes required	HE Head of Quality and Registry	CQS	November 2022
1.3	Scheduled review –amendments made to include links and reference to awarding body regulations.	Quality Officer – Partnerships	UCO CQSC TOC Curriculum & Quality	September 2024 October 2024
1.4	Scheduled review – removal of references to Open University	HE Quality and Standards Manager	UCO CQSC TOC Curriculum & Quality	May 2026 June 2026

Published on:

UCO Website	UCO Staff Intranet	UCO Student VLE
✓	✓	✓

Application for Recognition of Prior Learning

Guidance for Completion of this form

Before completing the form, applicants should first discuss their application with their Course Leader who will also be able to offer advice. Applicants should also read the HE Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and Procedure from which this document is included as an Appendix.

- **Applicants** - Complete all the Tables in **Section One**.
- It is your responsibility to ensure that the form has been completed correctly.
- Please bring your completed form and any additional evidence (such as qualification certificates) to: HE Student Services Team, University Campus Oldham, University Way, Oldham OL1 1BB
- Receipt of this form and supporting evidence will normally be acknowledged by the HE Student Services Team (HESS) within 3 days of receipt by email. You can contact the HESS by email: info@uco.oldham.ac.uk.
- Note that credit cannot be awarded for a fraction of a module because applicants must be able to demonstrate the ability to meet all of a module's learning outcomes. For this reason, the minimum number of credits that can be considered for exemption through the RPL process is the smallest-sized module within the programme on which the student intends to study. Typically, this value is 20.
- Where courses have statutory, regulatory or professional body restrictions on entry criteria, these may take precedence over College RPL policy. These restrictions are noted in the entry criteria for the programme.
- **Course Leaders** - Complete all Tables in **Section Two**.
- **HE Student Services Office** – Complete **Section Three**

SECTION ONE

Table One – Personal and Course Details
To be Completed by the Applicant

Full Name	
Date of Birth	
Contact Telephone Number(s)	
Email Address	

Contact Address	
UCAS PID or UCO Student ID Number	
Title of Course	
Year of Course (e.g. 1 or 2)	
Course Mode: Full-Time or Part-Time	
Table Two - Type of RPL <i>To be Completed by the Applicant</i>	
Type of RPL Please indicate the type of recognition of prior learning for which you want to apply. Your Course Leader will help you with this and detailed information is available in the HE Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and Procedure from which this document is included as Appendix 1. Please tick one box below: ☐ Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL) ☐ Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)	

Table Three – Application Details To be Completed by the Applicant
Application for Recognition of Prior Learning In the table below, please enter the Code, Title and Credit Value for the modules for which you are applying for RPL in the appropriate column. Your Course Leader can help you with this. <i>In the Evidence Colum:</i> <u>If you are applying for Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL):</u> For each of the modules you have listed, please give details of the qualifications/courses taken previously that you wish to be considered for exemption (grades need to be included where applicable). Please also state the name and address of the institution(s) at which you studied. Please bring your original certificate(s) to the HESS Office (not a copy). The HESS Team will photocopy your original and return your certificate(s). <u>If you are applying for Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL):</u> If you are claiming exemption from modules on the basis of experiential learning relating to knowledge gained in the workplace, please provide details of the type of work you believe supports your exemption for each module. Please also include the name, address and telephone number of the organisation(s) at which this experience was obtained and the name of an individual (such as a manager) that your Course Leader can contact.

If you are claiming exemption from modules on the basis of experiential learning relating to knowledge gained in a non-work situation, e.g. coverage of module content through working with a society, for each module, please provide a statement outlining this knowledge and experience and why you believe it is appropriate. Please also include the name, address and telephone number of the organisation(s) at which this experience was obtained and the name of an individual that your Course Leader can contact.

If your Course Leader advised you to provide any further evidence (such as a portfolio of work), please append separately. Please note in the Evidence column (for each module as appropriate) the type of additional evidence you have appended.

☐ Please tick this box if you have appended further evidence.

Module Code/Credit Value	Module Title	Relevant Learning Outcome	Evidence (Certificated or Experiential)

Table Four – Applicant Signature
To be Completed by the Applicant

Applicant Signature

Please sign in the space below and add the date you signed the form.

Date of Signature:

Applicants: Please retain a copy of this form and supporting documentation. Documents supplied as part of the application process will not be returned. Where photocopies of documents are submitted, you will be required to provide the HESS Office with sight of the original documents in order to verify their authenticity.

SECTION TWO

To be Completed by the Course Leader

EVALUATION OF CLAIM

Alignment of prior learning with course content and learning outcomes:

Please summarise how the prior learning aligns with the relevant element(s) of the course for which the applicant/student is seeking exemption (including equivalency of level, volume, subject content and learning outcomes)

Currency of prior learning:

Please confirm whether the prior learning remains current in terms of the content of the course (noting that prior learning should normally have taken place within the last five years and should meet the requirements of any relevant professional, statutory or regulatory body)

Course Leaders, please record your decision in the table below for each module. Note that your decisions will be reviewed by the RPL Panel to which you will be invited.

Module Code	Module Credit Value	RPL Exemption: Accepted or Rejected	If RPL Rejected, State Reasons
Date:		Signature:	

SECTION THREE

To be Completed by the HESS Office

HESS Office Staff, complete the table below and update student record.

Date Form sent to RPL Panel:

Date of RPL Panel:

Panel Decision:

Date Decision Communicated to Applicant:

Date Student Record Updated: