

Recognition of Prior (Experiential) Learning Policy

Responsibility for Policy:	Registrar and Deputy Chief Executive
Relevant to:	All LJMU Staff including Collaborative Partners, Students and Applicants
Approved by:	Academic Board 28 June 2017
Responsibility for Document Review:	Registrar and Deputy Chief Executive
Date introduced:	September 2015
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Next Review Date:	May 2020

RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

QAA UK Code of Practice

RELATED POLICIES & DOCUMENTS

Academic Framework Regulations
RP(E)L Handbook

Liverpool John Moores University

Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

1.0 Background

This policy outlines how formal recognition of learning gained elsewhere, where appropriate, can lead to the award of credit by Liverpool John Moores University in respect of that learning. Within a credit-based system, credit transfer and the recognition of prior learning provide greater flexibility in admitting students to University awards and it links prior learning experiences to current programmes of study so that the student gains maximum benefit from their studies. The recognition of prior learning also enables LJMU students to obtain credit for study completed as part of the University's Study Abroad scheme.

2.0 Principles

This policy aligns with the expectations and core practices of the *UK Quality Code for Higher Education*, ensuring that the assessment of claims for credit by the recognition of prior learning are reliable, fair and transparent.

Decisions about the recognition of prior learning take account of The *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies* (FHEQ)

Decisions about the recognition of prior learning are assessment decisions, and when part of the admissions process are not merely admission decisions.

The Academic Framework Regulations outline the maximum amount of credit from prior learning / credit transfer that can count toward LJMU awards.

Decisions taken in respect of claims for credit transfer / prior learning are informed by the following criteria:

- The credit must be for learning that is up to date, normally within 5 years of the start of the student beginning study on the programme to which the applicant is applying;
- The credit must be for learning that is relevant to the 'destination programme' and which can be demonstrated as equivalent to the learning outcomes of the module, group of modules or level that it replaces;
- The credit involved must match the level and volume of the learning that it replaces;
- 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.

Good practice in the management of assessment applies equally to processes for the RP(E)L: transparency, fairness, consistency, reliability, and validity.

The principles of internal and external moderation apply for all claims for the Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL).

3.0 Definitions related to Recognition of Prior Learning

Credit transfer	Where credit or (a) qualification(s) has/have been awarded by a UK higher education degree-awarding body in accordance with the relevant framework for higher education qualifications, the FHEQ.
Recognition of prior learning (RPL)	Learning that has been certificated. Prior certificated learning relates to prior learning, such as professional development awards or employment-based awards, which is at higher education level but which has not led to the award of UK credits or UK qualifications positioned on the relevant higher education qualifications framework.
Recognition of prior experiential learning (RPEL)	Informal uncertificated learning through experience, whether gained through work, voluntary activity or at home.
Recognition of prior (experiential) learning (RP(E)L)	An umbrella term, covering the wide range of an individual's prior learning, whether certificated or uncertificated.
Advanced standing (Also referred to as Advanced Entry)	Admission to a programme at a stage other than the initial stage, on the basis that a student so admitted is exempted from part of the programme, owing to equivalent prior learning that can be certified or evidenced.
Articulation arrangements	A process whereby all students who satisfy academic criteria on one programme are automatically entitled (on academic grounds) to be admitted with advanced standing to a subsequent part or year of a programme of a degree-awarding body.
General credit	The total amount of credit attributed to a specified learning outcome at a specific level on validation or accreditation. General credit is given for evidenced learning which is assigned to a set of learning outcomes such as those that comprise a group of modules or a complete level of a programme.

Specific Credit	Given when the outcomes achieved in the certificated or uncertificated learning match the learning outcomes of specific modules in the programme. All outcomes in the given module must have been achieved to at least the level which would be accepted in order to receive a pass by standard methods of delivery and assessment (e.g. 40%).
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4.0 Use of Recognition of Prior Learning

Credit transfer/RP(E)L may be used by individuals as:

- a means of gaining entry to award programmes part way through the programme, thus shortening the time required to complete a programme of study ('Advanced Standing');
- a means of obtaining LJMU credit following the completion of a University approved period of Study Abroad
- evidence to transfer/gain credits for individual modules.

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.

5.0 Summary of process

5.1 Applicant requesting advanced entry ('advanced standing') on the basis of credit transfer

Applications for advanced entry to the University on the basis of credit transfer are considered by the designated authority (Programme Leaders/Admissions Tutors) and any approval is authorised by the Chair of the Faculty Recognition Group (FRG) as part of the admissions process. Such approval requires formal verification that the relevant learning outcomes have been met via prior learning and that the applicant has provided suitable evidence as part of the application process. Decisions resulting in the transfer of credit are reported to the FRG.

5.2 Applicant requesting advanced entry ('advanced standing') on the basis of RP(E)L

Applicants with qualifications that are not recognised by the UK FHEQ will be considered and decisions determined by the FRG. Such a claim, as part of the application process, must be based on recent learning with clear equivalence to the learning outcomes of the proposed award programme and to authoritative external benchmarking. Evidence of general experience and learning at an equivalent level may be considered appropriate for accelerated entry and pre-requisite knowledge in some key areas may be deemed essential for some award programmes.

5.3 Applicant requesting RPEL (experiential learning)

The applicant is referred to the Faculty Registrar, who refers the applicant to the Programme Leader. The applicant completes an RPEL claim form. With the

guidance of the Programme Leader, the applicant produces evidence for the claim using a portfolio and mapping document. The portfolio and mapping document should clearly demonstrate evidence of learning at the appropriate level.

The claim is assessed by an Academic Assessor, who has not been directly involved in advising the applicant on the claim. The Academic Assessor completes the appropriate documentation, returns it and other claim material to the Faculty Registrar following completion of the moderation process. For claims of this nature moderation will include the programme External Examiner. The claim and recommendations are submitted to the FRG for approval.

6.0 The avoidance of double counting

In some cases, claims for **uncertificated** learning may, in effect, be for learning which is to be credited through credit transfer or certificated learning. For example, an engineering student 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 to be credited, then the claim should be denied as this would represent double-counting of the same learning.

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.

7.0 Student requesting transfer between programmes

Where an articulated progression route has been agreed (for example, when a LJMU-validation Foundation Degree provides a pathway onto level 6 of a LJMU honours programme), 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.

Students with LJMU credits and awards who transfer onto programmes within LJMU, or progress to another LJMU award, should have details of their prior study on their student record.

8.0 Student requesting the award of credit following the successful completion of a University 'Study Abroad' programme.

Prior to any period of 'Study Abroad', the student is assigned to an Advisor (normally a member of the LJMU programme team), who supports the student in developing a Learning Agreement and associated mapping document that demonstrates an equivalence of learning between the proposed programme of Study Abroad and the equivalent period of study at LJMU. Where the period of Study Abroad is to replace taught modules at LJMU, the mapping should be completed at module level. Where the period of Study Abroad is to be completed in addition to taught modules at LJMU, the mapping should be completed against programme-level learning outcomes.

Prior to a period of Study Abroad, the Programme Leader must ascertain that there is parity of marking between LJMU and the partner institution.

Learning Agreements are considered and approved by both the LJMU Programme Leader and appropriate Faculty Registrar, and are then endorsed by the relevant Faculty Recognition Group in advance of a learning agreement being signed by the students and the Faculty Registrar.

Following the successful completion of a period of Study Abroad, the student submits an application for the award of LJMU credit using the appropriate application form.

Each application is considered by the relevant Faculty Recognition Group. Unless the FRG is unable to establish parity in marking undertaken elsewhere then both credit and authoritative marks shall be accepted (regulation A2.3).

9.0 Marks and Credit

Credit awarded for learning from outside of the University is not graded, with the exception of credit obtained from a University's Study Abroad programme.

10.0 Reports to Boards of Examiners

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

11.0 Role Descriptions

Faculty Registrar: The Faculty Registrar gives initial advice on the nature of RP(E)L, its use within the context of the Academic Framework, and further information on the procedure.

Academic Assessor: The Assessors will study the material produced for the claim, will often interview the applicant 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.

12.0 Governance

The FRG is a sub-group of a Faculty Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (FQAEC). FRGs meet regularly, at published times and report to FQAEC on claims received and credit transferred or awarded. Credit transfer and the award of credit from prior learning are also reported to the Assessment Board.

Membership of each FRG is:

- Faculty Registrar, or nominee who shall be the Chair;
- Programme leaders associated with claims being made;
- Admissions Tutors (where appropriate);
- Other members co-opted as required.

A quorum must include the Chair, or suitable alternate, and at least two members of the FRG.

The standard terms of reference of a FRG are as follows:

- to consider whether credit awarded or transferred as a result of prior learning should be mark bearing (Academic Framework undergraduate regulation A2.3)
- to consider and decide on claims for the recognition of prior certificated learning from individual students, where it is not possible to transfer credit;
- to consider and decide on claims for the recognition of prior experiential learning from individual students;
- report to the Faculty Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee with a synopsis of claims received and credit transferred or awarded and to identify any policy issues arising;
- to provide Boards of Examiners with details of credits transferred or awarded via RP(E)L;
- to formally endorse each study abroad mapping document as a precondition of a learning agreement being signed by the students and the University;
- to formally record whether a forthcoming period of study abroad should be credit bearing.
- to formal confirm credit and marks upon receipt of material evidence of study abroad, as provided by the host institution and
- to verify, for publication with the Higher Education Achievement Report, records of extra-curricular student achievement.

Exceptionally, claims for credit for prior learning may be approved by the Chair and one other member of the FRG. All such exceptional approvals must be listed specifically in the report to the FQAEC.

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