

## POLICY & PROCEDURES



Policy Title	<b>RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) POLICY AND PROCEDURES</b>
Policy No	<b>WLCBMS014</b>
Responsible	<b>DEPUTY PRINCIPAL</b>
Approval By	<b>ACADEMIC COMMITTEE</b>
Approval Date	<b>AUGUST 2017</b>
Next Review	<b>AUGUST 2018</b>

# **RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

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# RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL)

## POLICY AND PROCEDURES

### SECTION 1: PRINCIPLES

1.1 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the generic term used for the award of credits on the basis of demonstrated learning that has occurred at some time in the past, prior to the current programme of study. It has two components RPCL and RPEL that are defined below.

**RPCL** denotes the Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning which is learning that has been previously assessed e.g. learning arising from professional awards, Higher National Diplomas, Foundation Degrees and other courses at an appropriate level.

**RPEL** denotes the Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning which is non-certificated (not previously assessed) however it is of equal standing to that awarded through the RPCL.

1.2 All students are offered the opportunity to demonstrate learning through an RPL process which is embedded in the College recruitment, selection and admissions processes (Ref: Doc 7.2) RPL is also be embedded in the College's Assessment Policy (Ref: Doc 7.3)

1.3 The responsibilities of students are explicit in the RPL process.

### SECTION 2: CONTEXT

This document outlines policy and gives general guidance on RPL for advanced standing or credit/unit exemption within HNC/HND and Postgraduate programmes delivered by the College. Specific APL rules for different awarding bodies can be found on their websites and override the College procedures.

2.1 Within the RPL there are two main categories:

- RPCL - the Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning, i.e. learning for which certification has been awarded by an educational institution or another education/training provider.
- RPEL - the Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning, i.e. non-certificated learning gained from experience.

2.2 Prior learning may have been gained in a number of ways, for example:

- in paid work
- in unpaid work
- as a result of courses attended in educational establishments or at work
- through self-directed study

- through leisure pursuits

### **SECTION 3: RESPONSIBILITIES**

3.1 The Deputy Principal has overall responsibility for the RPL Policy which is reviewed annually by the Academic Committee to ensure that its procedures are fair and that it provides for equality of opportunity.

3.2 The Deputy Principal delegates responsibility for the RPL procedures to the Admissions Panel. Any RPL applications are reviewed by an Admissions Panel consisting of Admissions Manager and 2 members of the Academic Management.

### **SECTION 4: RECOGNITION OF PRIOR CERTIFICATED LEARNING (RPCL)**

The College ensures that all students meet a required standard on its awards and that all students are treated equitably. Where RPCL is being sought for the award of academic credit the College must make certain that the learning derived from prior certificated study is equivalent to that of the learning that might otherwise have been achieved by following the full programme of study. Consequently it must be satisfied that the evidence submitted in support of an RPCL claim meets the following criteria:

- **Validity.**

The evidence must show that the prior learning for which the applicant is making a claim is relevant to the programme of study s/he has applied for at the College. The applicant must be able to demonstrate that there is an appropriate match in both level and content between their previous studies and the module or modules for which they are seeking exemption.

- **Currency.**

Prior learning must have been gained recently enough to still be of value. The time limits on learning will vary according to subject area but qualifications more than five years old are unlikely to be considered.

- **Sufficiency.**

The applicant must provide enough evidence to demonstrate fully the achievement of the credit being claimed.

- **Authenticity.**

The evidence should be clearly related to the applicant's own efforts and able to be verified as such.

- **Equivalency**

It is the responsibility of the applicant to check that their previous studies were taken at the same level as (or higher than) the qualification they wish to claim credit towards. The College is only able to consider an applicant's previous studies for RPCL if they closely match the content of the modules from which the applicant is seeking exemption. In assessing an RPCL claim the College will wish to consider if the stated learning outcomes of the module/s from which the applicant is requesting exemption have been adequately met by his or her previous studies.

#### **4.1 How and When to Make a Claim for RPCL**

Individuals who wish to make a claim for the Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning are required to complete an RPCL application form Appendix 1. Alternatively a paper application form can be obtained from the Admissions Manager. Applications for RPCL should ideally be made prior to the commencement date of the course. It is important to

realise that an application for admission to a course is completely separate from an application for RPCL and each application will be assessed individually on their merits

#### **4.2 Assessment of RPCL Claims**

Upon receipt of the application form the Admissions Manager with responsibility for RPL will ensure that there is sufficient evidence to process the claim. If the application form is incomplete, if the applicant has failed to enclose adequate supporting documentation or if there are any queries about the applicant's previous studies the Admissions Manager will contact the applicant. The application will not be processed until such time as the applicant has provided the required evidence. In some circumstances, providing data protection policy is observed, it may also be necessary for the Admissions Manager to contact the applicant's prior Educational Institution for information about their studies. For example, more detailed evidence about course content than is available in a standard course syllabus may be required. Once the Admissions Manager is happy the application for RPCL is complete, the application form will be sent to the Admission panel. The Admission panel will assess the RPCL claim and, make a decision. The Admissions Manager will notify the applicant of the College's decision in writing. If the application for RPCL is successful the letter will state the amount of credit to be awarded and the titles of any exempted modules.

Due to the varied nature of RPCL claims decision times will vary. However, as a guide applicants should expect to receive a decision on their application in approximately 4-6 weeks (provided the application is complete when it is received by Admissions). If no decision is received within this time applicants are welcome to contact the Admissions Manager with responsibility for RPL to check on the status of their application.

#### **4.3 Appeals**

The College will not review an RPL decision where the grounds for requesting a review are simply that the applicant disagrees with the academic judgement that has been applied, and where there is no evidence that the correct procedures have not been followed. The College shall not be obliged to consider an appeal simply on the grounds that the applicant is unwilling to accept the original decision not to grant credit, and seeks to overturn that decision. Applicants whose claims for RPCL are unsuccessful may only request a review of the decision on the basis of additional evidence that was unavailable at the time of the application. For example, if the applicant subsequently obtains additional documentation pertaining to their prior certificated study which supports their claim. A request for a formal review of the decision should be made in writing and addressed to the Admissions Manager with responsibility for RPL.

### **SECTION 5: RECOGNITION OF PRIOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING (RPEL)**

The Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning or RPEL is the process by which credit is given for learning acquired outside formal education and training systems (for example, through work experience). It requires a judgement to be made about the level of knowledge and skills acquired through life, work experience (paid or unpaid) and non-certificated study and their appropriateness for exemption from part of a course. The RPEL process does not apply to the assessment of an individual's prior experience for the purpose of entry to a programme of study, only to the assessment of their eligibility

for exemption from a module/unit providing the student prepares a portfolio to either the Admissions panel (if seeking RPEL at Admissions stage) or Exemptions Panel (if presenting their case for RPEL mid semester)

### **5.1 How to Make a Claim for RPEL**

- a) Individuals who wish to make a claim for the Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning are required to complete an RPCL application form Appendix 2. Alternatively a paper application form can be obtained from the Admissions Manager
- b) Applicants making an RPEL claim must understand that it is the outcomes of any learning gained via experience that might be accredited and not just the activity of learning itself. Therefore reflection on their learning will be required as part of the RPEL application process.
- c) Applicants making an application for RPEL must be aware of the demands of submitting such a claim at the outset. They must understand that if they are subsequently advised to produce a portfolio of evidence to support their RPEL claim they will primarily be required to work independently to produce this portfolio.
- d) Applicants seeking RPEL are advised to contact the relevant Tutor in the first instance, so that an initial assessment can be carried out as to whether the applicant is eligible to pursue such a claim and proceed to portfolio.
- e) Following an initial assessment, applicants will be expected to follow the appropriate portfolio model, plus complete any other assessments (including interviews) deemed appropriate by the College.
- f) Applicants may only start work on an RPEL portfolio if this has been agreed with the College, and once they hold and have accepted an unconditional place.
- g) Applicants for RPEL must be aware that the production of a portfolio, or completion of any other assessments required by the College in order to evaluate an RPEL claim, does not guarantee that credit will be awarded.

### **5.2 Methods of Assessment**

Although less easy to assess than prior certificated learning, there are various methods Colleges can use to evaluate prior experiential learning and determine whether an applicant has met the learning outcomes of the module/s for which they are seeking exemption. RPEL process is outlined below, with common steps and actions outlined.

#### **Stage 1 – Awareness, information and guidance**

Ahead of enrolling a potential learner, the possibility that they may be able to claim unit(s) for some of their previous learning and/or experience should be raised with them. If the learner is interested in this, they will need to know the:

- Process of claiming achievement by using RPEL
- Sources of support and guidance available to them
- Timelines, appeals processes and any fees involved

#### **Stage 2 – Pre-assessment, gathering evidence and giving information.**

At this stage the learner will carry out the process of collecting evidence against the requirements of the relevant unit(s). In most cases this evidence will be in the form of a pre assessed portfolio of work (based on the module/unit that the student wishes to apply for exemption). However in certain cases the development of an assessment plan

and tracking document or similar may be required, to support the learner through the process. The evidence gathered will need to meet the standards of the unit, or part of unit, that the evidence is being used for.

### **Stage 3 – Assessment/documentation of evidence**

Assessment as part of RPEL is a structured process for gathering and reviewing evidence and making judgments about a learners' prior learning and experience in relation to unit standards. The assessor may be looking at work experience records, validated by managers; previous portfolios of evidence put together by the learner or essays and reports validated as being the learner's own unaided work. All evidence must be countersigned by a professional witness who has direct involvement in its original assessment.

Assessment must be valid and reliable to ensure the integrity of the award of unit(s) and, as above, the evidence gathered needs to meet the standards of the unit, or part of unit, that the evidence is being used for.

If the collated evidence of RPEL for a learner is judged by the assessor not to be sufficient to meet all the requirements of the relevant unit(s), then the learner will have to complete the normal assessment pathway for those unit(s) if they wish to be awarded the qualification.

The assessment process will be subject to the usual quality assurance procedures of the centre.

### **Stage 4 – Claiming certification**

Once the internal and external quality assurance procedures have been successfully completed, certification claims can be made and Assessment and internal verification records, along with any additional RPEL records completed, will be retained for the standard three year period following certification. The assessor must ensure that all learning outcomes and assessment criteria being claimed for each unit are achieved and that the records of assessment are maintained.

### **5.3 Appeals**

As with any assessment decision on procedural grounds; if a learner wishes to appeal against a decision made about their assessment they need to follow the standard Internal Academic Appeals procedures.

## **SECTION 6: MONITORING AND QUALITY ASSURANCE**

6.1 In order to ensure the decision making process is transparent and decisions are consistent the Quality Assurance Committee reviews the process through its annual audit (AQA).

6.2 It is important that departments monitor the progress of students admitted with RPL, so that information is built up on the suitability of particular qualifications or patterns of experience for the granting of advanced standing or credit exemption.

6.3 Staff development annual programmes include provision for those members of staff who are directly involved in the RPL process.

## **SECTION 7: RELATED DOCUMENTS**

1. Academic Appeals procedure (Wlcb001)
2. Recruitment, Selection and Admissions Policy and Procedures (Wlcb015)
3. Assessment Policy and Procedures (Wlcb002)
4. Data Protection Policy (Wlcb004)

## **§SECTION 8: APPENDICES**

1. RPCL FORM
2. RPEL FORM
3. Terms of Reference – Admissions and Exemptions Panels

**APPLICATION FOR THE RECOGNITION OF PRIOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**

<b>Title</b>		<b>Surname</b>		<b>First names</b>	
<b>Telephone</b>			<b>Email</b>		
<b>Name of Programme</b>					

**Mapping and Comments of Academic Coordinator**

<p><b>Outline description of prior experience and the nature of evidence of learning. All written evidence pertinent to the experiential learning for which accreditation is claimed must be attached to this application.</b></p>

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**Comments of Chair of the Admission Panel**

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**Applicant authorisation**

<p>I .....(applicant name) give authorisation for WLCBMS management to request information pertaining only to my application from third parties.</p>
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<b>Signature</b>			
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<b>Title</b>		<b>Surname</b>		<b>First names</b>	
<b>Telephone</b>			<b>Email</b>		
<b>Previous Programme &amp; Institution</b>			<b>Programme applied for</b>		
<b>Details of Prior Learning (modules)</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Credit</b>	<b>Code and Title of Module to be accredited</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Credit</b>

**Important Note to Applicant:**

Transcript, Programme Specifications and Module Descriptors for which accreditation is claimed **must** be attached to this application. Applications without the appropriate documentation will not be considered

**Part C - Mapping and Comments of Dean of Teaching**

<b>Student Outcomes Achieved</b>	<b>WLCBMS Programme and Module Outcomes</b>

**Comments of Chair of the Admission Panel**

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**Applicant authorisation**

I .....(applicant name) give authorisation for WLCBMS management to request information pertaining only to my application from third parties

<b>Signature</b>		
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