Recognition of Prior Learning

(Higher Education)

Formal Review Cycle	Bi-annual		
Latest Formal Review (date)	June 2023	Next Formal Review Due (date)	June 2025
Procedure Owner	Associate Principal for Teaching, learning and Quality		
Procedure Author	Lead for HE Quality		

Approvals

Board of Corp Y/N	N	Committee		Date Board approved	
SLT Y/N	Y	SLT date approved	March 2023	Additional committee	

Publication

Website Y/N	Y	Unify Y/N	Y	Student VLE Y/N	Y	Other	

Change History

Version	Date Reviewed/ Revised	Description of Change	Reviewed by	Approved by
1	Nov 2022	New procedure	ELT	

Accreditation of Prior Learning

1. Procedure Statement
This Code of Practice sets out the key principles and processes relating to recognition of prior learning (RPL) also referred to as Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)

1.1. This procedure is a procedure of the City of Sunderland College, trading as Education Partnership North East (which includes Sunderland College, Hartlepool Sixth Form College and Northumberland College). These colleges will be referred to as "the College" throughout this document.

2. Scope
Its content provides clarity regarding the rights and responsibilities within the RPL process for:
  i.   applicants wishing to gain accelerated entry into higher education
  ii.   students currently enrolled at the College wishing to gain exemption from a module(s) not yet studied
  iii.   staff supporting applicants or students making a claim
  iv.   the Board responsible for making RPL decisions

It provides advice on the process for gaining accelerated entry based on:
  i.   Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPcL) – by claiming credits
  ii.   Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPeL) – by claiming credits against relevant work or life experience or other uncertificated learning

The Code of Practice is written with regard to the codes and regulations as defined by the following awarding bodies:
  i.   University of Sunderland
  ii.   University of Cumbria
  iii.   Pearson

Applications for University of Sunderland provision will follow the university's process: Accreditation of Prior Learning | The University of Sunderland. The university will make every effort to assess an application within 4 weeks of the submission date and it must be assessed within 8 weeks.

Applications for University of Cumbria provision will follow the universities academic regulations : Academic Regulations (cumbria.ac.uk) and Appendix 6 (cumbria.ac.uk)

Excluding Edexcel programmes, in every instance the final arbiter of any RPL application will be the awarding body

The College may at anytime add to the list of awarding bodies through the College's Curriculum planning and authentication process.

3. Aims of the Procedure/Underpinning Principles

3.1. Its content provides clarity regarding the rights and responsibilities within the RPL process for:

i.   applicants wishing to gain accelerated entry into higher education

ii.   students currently enrolled at the College wishing to gain exemption from a module(s) not yet studied

iii.   staff supporting applicants or students making a claim

iv.   the Board responsible for making RPL decisions

3.2. The College values diversity and inclusion and is committed to promoting equal opportunities and eliminating discrimination. Therefore, everyone will apply and administer this procedure fairly and consistently to ensure that there is no discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital and civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, **(and for student facing policies include)** persons in care and care leavers, carers and care givers, young parents, youth offenders, and those receiving free school meals.

4. Responsibilities

Applicant/ student:

It is the responsibility of the applicant/student to:

- Fully complete the RPL Application Form and Mapping Document
- Submit their RPL application inclusive of all the information required by the HE Group for a decision to be made.

Programme leader/ module tutor

It is the responsibility of the programme leader/ module tutor to:

- Meet with the applicant/student prior to the completion of an RPL claim to provide information, advice, and guidance regarding the RPL claim and to clarify the type and extent of RPL that the tutor is comfortable in supporting
- Meet with the applicant/ student prior to the completion of an RPL claim to clarify the range and type of evidence required and to assist in the completion of the mapping document.
- Provide the student with the learning outcomes for each module that the applicant/ student wishes to make a claim against
- Complete the RPL application within 20 working days of the initial request being made by the applicant/ student).

Lead for HE Quality

It is the responsibility of the Lead for HE Quality to:

- To ensure that programme leaders/ module tutors are trained in the procedure
- To support programme leaders/module tutors to implement the policy and ensure clarity
- To liaise with awarding bodies to support the smooth running of this procedure

HE Group

It is the responsibility of the HE Group to:

- To review all RPL applications and confirm outcome of application to the Programme Leader
- To ensure parity of decisions based on evidence provided for RPL applications

5. Implementation

Admission with Credit

Applicants and enrolled students may be admitted with credit for prior learning to programmes at both undergraduate and post graduate level

Most claims for credit are likely to be against specific modules whose learning outcomes match the certificated learning and/or the learning gained from experience. This is referred to as 'specific credit'

If certificated, or experiential learning, does not exactly match modules specifically, but does reflect the aims and learning outcomes of the programme, RPL may be awarded for 'general credit'

Applicants and enrolled students may make application for:

> *Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPcL) – by claiming credits against*
> > *i) successful completion of a certificated and relevant programme of study or*
> > *ii) successful completion of part of a relevant programme of study where credits have been awarded, at least at the equivalent level.*
> *Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPeL) – by claiming credits against relevant work or life experience or other uncertificated learning in which the acquisition of skills or knowledge at the equivalent level to the higher education programme has been gained.*

Credit which has previously been used to award a 'qualification', must not be used towards credit for another qualification at the same level, unless it is recognised as credit for direct entry to the next level of study i.e. credits awarded on a Higher National Certificate or Certificate in Higher Education (Level 4) may not be used towards another Certificate in Higher Education, but can be used towards a Higher National Diploma, Foundation Degree, Diploma in Higher Education or Honours degree.

Recognition can only be granted against whole modules.

Normally an applicant or enrolled student will not be admitted with credit to a point more than halfway through their final level of a programme of study and the last 60 credits must be delivered at the College. For example, an application for RPL onto a Foundation Degree will not normally be granted beyond the first 120 credits of the award.

The support of the programme leader in determining whether an application is suitable for approval for RPL is important. Academic staff must provide both the applicant and HE Group, details of their judgement regarding the academic suitability of the request for RPL

- Regardless of the academic tutors 'view' on the suitability of the RPL request, academic tutors must not sanction any request for RPL and in all instances must not allow an applicant/ student RPL prior to formal approval by the HE Group

- Applicants/ students must attend all scheduled modules until formal approval is given for any exemption from a module

Evidence

The College must be able to assure itself that any claim to accredit prior learning is acceptable, sufficient, authentic, and current.

If within the claim, the evidence is being presented to 'match' a module, evidence must be presented in such a way that the HE Group can easily determine the extent to which the evidence matches, as far as possible, the learning outcomes for that specific module.

Certificated Learning

Certificated learning claims must be supported by the official transcript made by the awarding body of the original qualification. This should include any guidance explaining the allocation of credit and the grading scheme of the awarding body

Where credit has not yet been confirmed, academic references from the awarding body must be supplied and any offer made must be conditional

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning claims must be supported by a portfolio of evidence

The most successful RPeL cases are those where a supportive portfolio of evidence is provided with detailed and comprehensive information regarding the claim. Often portfolios seen by the HE Group have included several types of evidence to support an applicant's learning and achievements, together with commentaries and proof of authenticity. Examples may include:

- A professional narrative/essay on the learning you have gained

- Samples of work

- Practice-based documents

- Reports on observations of practice

- Video/audio tapes with commentary and analysis related to achievement of learning outcomes

- Witness testimonies from relevant people such as line managers, colleagues, those who can confirm your achievement/learning gained

The claim must always be accompanied by a letter or statement of support from the programme leader. Copies of interviews with the relevant programme leader are particularly useful. Copies of interviews can often reassure an HE Group that particular attention has been given to ensure that should the accreditation be granted, the applicant or enrolled student would be able to cope with the demands of the programme

Submission of RPL Claims and Timescales
- RPL claims must be submitted to the respective programme leader.
- Upon submission the claim the programme leader will record the date on the application and email confirmation of receipt to the applicant/ student

- All applications will be reviewed by a panel which will consist of two academics and a representative from Quality.
- An applicant/ student can expect a formal written outcome from the claim within 20working days of the submission of the RPL claim
- Should an applicant/ student not receive a response within 10 working days of the submission of the RPL claim, they should contact the College's HE Directorate on HE@sunderlandcollege.ac.uk
- A copy of the RPL outcome must be sent to the programme leader/module tutor within 12 days of the claim being submitted by the applicant/ student

6. Associated Documents

Concern, Complaint and Appeals

Applicants (that are enrolled students of the College) can raise a concern or complaint following the Compliments, Complaints and Suggestion Procedure.

Applicants (that are not enrolled students of the College) can make a complaint by following Higher Education Admissions Appeals & Complaints

Applicants/ students should note that all policies can be obtained in hard copy from the College's Corporate Governance and Policy department.

Additional Guidance

The following section provide additional guidance and information regarding the policies and regulations imposed by the College' awarding bodies. Applicants, students, and staff should note that the information provided is for guidance only as the awarding body regulations are subject to change.

University of Cumbria

Link to the university's guidance https://www.cumbria.ac.uk/study/how-to-apply/accreditation-of-prior-learning-apl/

University of Sunderland

Link to the University's procedure
https://my.sunderland.ac.uk/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=105484841

Pearson Edexcel

External verification/moderation of APL evidence will be considered in the same way as traditional evidence for the same qualification.

When approving credits, these will generally be made at Pass level however the HE Group may still consider awarding at Merit or Distinction level.

7. Procedure Monitoring and Review

This procedure will be reviewed every two years unless changes to legislation requires earlier review.
The effectiveness of this procedure is reviewed through:
- Feedback from applicants on the effectiveness of the procedure and procedure
- Feedback from staff on the effectiveness of the procedure and procedure
- Feedback received from awarding bodies and from external review activities
- Review of applications through RPL with a report going to SLT

8. Equality Impact Assessment

(Consider whether the procedure or procedures may disproportionately impact any group.)

Have you sought consultation on this procedure? Details:				
Could a particular group be affected (negatively or positively)?	**Impact Y/N**	**Description of Impact**	**Evidence**	**Mitigation/ Justification**
Protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010				
Age	Y	Students who meet entry requirements must be accepted onto a programme. Consideration on potential impact should be given when a student does not meet the entry criteria and could secure a place via the non-standard entry process.		staff training to include E&D compulsory training and refresher training. Other training programmes such as unconscious bias training should be delivered. Reports will monitor the 'rejection' of RPL applications to ensure they are assessed and consistency applied.
Disability	Y			
Gender Reassignment	Y			
Marriage and Civil Partnership	Y			
Pregnancy and maternity	Y			
Race	Y			
Religion or belief	Y			
Sex	Y			
Sexual Orientation	Y			
Additional characteristics to consider				
Young Persons in Care & Care Leavers		As above		As above
Young Carers & Care Givers		As above		As above
Young Parents		As above		As above

Youth Offenders		As above		As above
Those Receiving Free School Meals		As above		As above
If there is no impact, please explain:				