Recognition of Prior Learning
Recognition of Prior (Experiential) Learning

1 Purpose and Scope

1.1. This document outlines the University’s policy on the recognition of prior learning (RPL)\(^1\) and recognition of prior experiential learning (RPEL).

1.2. It defines the basic terminology associated with such recognition.

1.3. This policy applies to all RPL and RPEL activities within the University, at both undergraduate and postgraduate level.

1.4. The policy may be varied under the terms of an Institutional Agreement where a programme is delivered as a collaborative initiative with a partner organisation.

1.5. The purpose of this policy is to enable the University to assure itself that credit awarded for prior learning and/or prior experiential learning is comparable to that achieved through the teaching and learning activities required for specified modules within Cardiff University programmes on which the learner is or will be registered. The policy reflects the University’s commitment to enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved prior learning outcomes, in line with the expectations set out in chapter B6 of the QAA quality code.

1.6. Where Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body requirements place specific restrictions or limitations on RPL/RPEL this policy does not apply. For such programmes, information on RPL/RPEL should be sought from the Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body.

1.7. This policy should be read in association with:
   - [Cardiff University Academic Regulations](#)
   - [Credit Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#).

2 Principles

2.1. Decisions on RPL are a matter of academic judgement. The decision-making process and outcomes should be transparent and demonstrably rigorous and fair. Staff and students should be able to access adequate and timely information, guidance and support at all stages of the process (QAA Quality Code Chapter B6: Assessment of students and the recognition of prior learning).

2.2. As applications for RPL are based on the judgement of selectors, in line with the [University’s Complaints and Appeals Procedure for Applicants](#) there will not be any right of appeal against the academic judgement.

2.3. **Minimum and maximum thresholds for RPL:** The University will not permit exemptions of fractional modules and so the minimum threshold for the application of RPL procedures will be a single, free standing module (including 10 credit modules). The **maximum threshold for exemption will be 50% of the total credits required for the taught element of the programme of study.** The expectation is that at least 50% of the total credits required for the taught element of the programme will be Cardiff University credits. Requests for exemption beyond the permitted limits (maximum of 50% of the total

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\(^1\) Throughout this document, the abbreviation RPL includes RPEL unless otherwise stated.
2.4 Requests for exceptions shall only be approved when recognition is being given for previous study and/or experience undertaken or gained within three years prior to admission to the Programme (see 5.2).

2.5 Requests for RPEL, and RPL in relation to research will be dealt with on an individual basis, and approved by an independent panel (see 5.3).

2.6 Applicants may demonstrate that they meet the learning outcomes of a particular module through a mixture of RPL and RPEL demonstrated by portfolio evidence.

3 Terminology

3.1 Direct entry qualifications in relation to RPL: The University publishes the entry requirements for admission to the first year of a specified programme of study. However, the University also recognises that some qualifications provide evidence of academic attainment that would equip the prospective student for direct entry into the second (or in the case of 4-year taught programmes, the third) year of a programme of study. Formal RPL procedures are not required in order to admit students with such qualifications.

3.2 Articulation arrangement: a process whereby an awarding institution reviews provision at another organisation and judges that the curriculum of a specified programme (or a specified part) provides an appropriate basis, and is of an appropriate academic standard, to be deemed equivalent to the identified components of one or more specified programmes delivered by the awarding institution enabling direct entry to a specified part of a programme. Specific curriculum mapping documentation is available to support Schools with this process with advice and guidance from the International Office.

3.3 Recognition of Prior Learning is the process by which the University recognises that a student has completed formal education in an area related to their programme of study which has enabled them to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes of one or more of its modules.

3.4 Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning is the procedure by which the University recognises that a student has demonstrated achievement of the learning outcomes of one or more of its modules through experience and practice. Students may also be given credit in general terms for prior experience.

3.5 Credit may be awarded in the form of an exemption from an individual module where an RPL procedure has produced evidence that the student has successfully achieved the learning outcomes of that module. Credit may be awarded against compulsory (i.e. core/required) modules or against optional modules.

4 Process

4.1 The process for applicants wishing to make a claim for recognition of prior learning is explained in the University's Admissions Policy pages.

4.2 Heads of School (with support from relevant support staff) are responsible for ensuring that applicants have access to appropriate guidance and support during the preparation of their portfolios and the evidence required for consideration. However, the responsibility for demonstrating the relevance of their learning and producing the evidence resides with the applicant.

4.3 For recognition of prior learning, in appropriate cases where claims of comparability are well supported through mapping of learning outcomes which are aligned to
professional/sector standards of competence, the Higher Education Qualifications Framework including level descriptors, and subject benchmark statements or documents of equivalent status, Programme Directors may decide the award of credit immediately.

4.4 Where the claim for recognition of prior learning is not well supported, Programme Directors may decide not to award credit.

5 Exceptions

5.1 Programme Directors may not approve the award of credit in cases where exemption from the permitted limits is being requested. In such cases, the portfolio of evidence is considered for approval by an Independent Panel on behalf of the Admissions Policy Group. The Panel will be chaired by the Chair of the Admissions Policy Group (or nominee) and will include a representative of the Head of School and from the relevant College, with Professional Services support from Registry and Admissions.

5.2 The Panel will also consider any cases where an exceptional request for recognition is made for credit or experience which is more than three years old before the start of the academic year in which Cardiff University module would be undertaken within the programme of study.

5.3 In all instances of applications for recognition of prior experiential learning, accreditation of research, and where advice is sought in more complex cases for recognition of prior learning, the portfolio of evidence will be considered for approval by an Independent Panel on behalf of the Admissions Policy Group. The Panel will be chaired by the Chair of the Admissions Policy Group (or nominee) and will include a representative of the Head of School and from the relevant College, with Professional Services support from Registry and Admissions.

6 Outcomes

6.1 All decisions will be reported by the Head of School (or nominee) to Admissions, in order for the applicant to be informed, the decision to be processed by the Student Operations team, and a report made back to Admissions Policy Group.

7 External Examiners

7.1 The Head of School is responsible for ensuring that External Examiners are aware of the policy in place for applying RPL/RPEL.

7 Marks

7.1 Marks are not awarded for RPL credits except where the previous study was undertaken at Cardiff University. Where the mark for the module(s) concerned would contribute to the final degree classification, such module(s) will be excluded from the calculation and the average based on the modules taken at Cardiff University only.

8 Reporting, monitoring and review

8.1 Admissions will provide regular reports to Admissions Policy Group, and an annual report to the Admissions and Recruitment Strategy Group summarising all cases of decisions made in the previous year, classifying them by level and type of award. Any exceptions approved by the Independent Panel on behalf of the Admissions Policy Group will be reported anonymously.