

## Recognition of Prior Learning and Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning Policy for Taught programmes

### 1. Purpose and Scope

- 1.1 This document outlines Cardiff University's policy on the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL, and /Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL), sometimes referred to as Advanced Standing, Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL), or Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL).
  - 1.1.1 Throughout this document, the abbreviation RPL includes RPEL unless otherwise stated.
- 1.2 It defines the basic terminology associated with such recognition.
- 1.3 This policy applies to all RPL activities within the University, at both undergraduate and postgraduate taught level.
  - 1.3.1 Requests for RPL in relation to research will be dealt with on an individual basis by the Academic School(s).
- 1.4 This policy applies only to applicants and is not applicable to current Cardiff University students.
- 1.5 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 (see Appendix 1).
- 1.6 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](#).
- 1.7 Where Professional, Statutory, and Regulatory Body requirements place specific restrictions or limitations on RPL, this policy does not apply. For such programmes, information on RPL, should be sought from the relevant Professional, Statutory, or Regulatory Body.
- 1.8 This policy should be read in association with:
  - [Cardiff University Academic Regulations](#)
  - [Cardiff University Admissions Policies including English language requirements](#)

- [Cardiff University Tuition Fee Policy](#)
- [Credit Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#).

## 2 Terminology

- 2.1 **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 but subject specific requirements must be met (where applicable) and [time limits on the validity of such qualifications](#) will apply.
- 2.2 **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 Academic Schools with this process with advice and guidance from the International Office.
- 2.3 **Recognition of Prior Learning:** 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. This may include credits gained from another institution.
- 2.4 **Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning:** 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.
- 2.5 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.

## 3. Principles

- 3.1 Decisions on RPL are a matter of academic judgement. The decision-making process and outcomes should be transparent and demonstrably rigorous and fair. Staff, applicants, 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).
- 3.1.1 Decisions on direct entry qualifications in relation to RPL where the qualifications fall outside the specified validity period (5 years) are also a matter of academic

judgement. However, applicants must supply evidence, such as a portfolio or references, to demonstrate that knowledge/skill-levels have been maintained during the gap in studies.

- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 **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.
- 3.4. Requests for exceptions shall only be approved when recognition is being given for previous study and/or experience undertaken or gained within five years prior to admission to the Programme (see 5).
- 3.5. Applicants may demonstrate that they meet the learning outcomes of a particular module through a mixture of RPL and RPEL demonstrated by portfolio evidence.

#### **4 Process**

- 4.1. The procedure 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 or their nominee (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 RPL, 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 recommend the applicant be made exempt from certain modules.
- 4.4 Where the claim for RPL is not well supported, Programme Directors may decide not to proceed with the RPL request.

#### **5 Exceptions**

- 5.1. Programme Directors may not approve module exemptions in cases where an exception to the permitted limits is being requested. In such cases, the portfolio of evidence is considered for approval by the Head of School/Director of Recruitment

and Admissions (DoRA), and in some cases may require the approval of a Pro-Vice Chancellor.

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

## **6 Outcomes**

- 6.1 All decisions will be reported by the Head of School (or nominee) to the applicant directly, only after approval has been received from Admissions and Registry.
- 6.2 Any relevant documentation will be uploaded by the Admissions Team to the applicants' online application form.
- 6.3 In the case of a successful outcome:  
Admissions will take action if required as part of the application process, for example, entry onto year 2 of study.  
Registry will take relevant action on the student record at the point of enrolment to ensure the applicant is made exempt from the relevant modules.
- 6.4 In the case of an unsuccessful outcome the School will inform the applicant directly in writing.

## **7 External Examiners**

- 7.1 The Head of School (or nominee) is responsible for ensuring that External Examiners are aware of the policy in place for applying RPL/RPEL and how this may apply to the relevant students.

## **8 Marks**

- 8.1. 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.

## **9 Monitoring and review**

- 9.1. The School and associate College are responsible for monitoring and reviewing applications for RPL.

## **10. Storage and Processing of RPL/Advanced Standing Requests**

- 10.1 The information provided as part of the RPL/Advanced Standing request will be stored and processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation 2018.

## 11 Contact Details

For further information please contact the Admissions Support Team:

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