

## Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

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<b>Audience:</b>	OBC Staff, Students and Website (General Public)

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# 1 Introduction

The College recognises that many students, who do not have qualifications obtained through a conventional educational route, may have prior knowledge or experience that equips them for succeeding on a higher education course of study. Students may have prior learning or experience which could exempt them from the need to have qualifications to enter a course or it may give them partial accreditation of a course and exempt them from having to study certain modules in order to pass. The College has partnerships with awarding organisations that have their own approach to the accreditation and recognition of prior learning and this policy sets out how the College takes these into account as well.

## 2 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to enable recognition of prior learning (RPL) from a range of activities using appropriate assessment methodology. Providing that the assessment requirements of a given unit or qualification have been met, the use of RPL is acceptable for accrediting a unit, units or a whole qualification where the evidence is valid and reliable.

## 3 Definitions of RPL

The recognition of prior learning (RPL) is where learners demonstrate that they can meet the assessment criteria within a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills they already possess without undertaking an additional course of learning. It is an acknowledged assessment activity within nationally regulated qualifications.

RPL as an overall process embraces two subsets:

**3.1 Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) (refer to partner policies and processes)**– the process for an applicant to seek formal recognition of prior learning they have achieved through experience, such as professional work experience which is evidenced.

**3.2 Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL)** – the process for an applicant to seek formal recognition of prior learning from qualifications they hold that are not recognised within the rules of combination of the proposed qualification.

It is usual that RPL may be claimed against one or more units but not against part of a unit, and the learner is responsible for making relevant staff aware of their wish to make an RPL application.

The range of abbreviations that are commonly used for what is collectively referred to here as RPL include the following:

APL Accreditation of Prior Learning

APEL Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning

APA Accreditation of Prior Achievement

APLA Accreditation of Prior Learning and Achievement.

## 4 Scope and of RPL

This policy applies to all or part of a College course where the learning is evidenced by course work. Where learning is evidenced only through an examination, the learner is required to sit this examination. The College recognises UK national frameworks including those in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. This policy also applies to qualifications under the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF). The courses that the policy applies to are listed in the table below.

Academic Programmes	Awarding Organisations (AOs)
BA (Hons) in Business Management with Foundation Year	Bucks New University (BNU)
BA (Hons) in Business Management	
BA (Hons) in Business Management (Top-Up)	
BSc (Hons) Business Management With Foundation Year	Ravensbourne University (RUL)
BA(Hons)Business studies with foundation year	University of West London
Foundation Certificate in Tourism and Event Management	New College Durham
Fdsc Leadership Principles in Health and Social care	New College Durham

This policy refers to prior learning gained through certified courses that are not within the defined programme of study. It also refers to experience gained, such as a period of time in employment where the student is able to demonstrate appropriate learning has taken place, equivalent to that which would have been gained by taking a particular programme of study. Work experience taken into consideration as evidence for RPL would normally be expected to have lasted for a minimum of two years. In some exceptional cases the College can accept one year of work experience if that experience is considered of equivalent to an assessment of relevant coursework.

## 5 Operational Application

RPL is a valid method of enabling individuals to claim credit for units, irrespective of how their learning took place. There is no difference between the achievement of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of a unit through prior and experiential learning or through a formal programme of study. The College will focus upon assessment and awarding of credit for prior and experiential learning which may count as evidence towards the entry requirements for any of the College's academic programmes such as a unit accumulated towards a full BTEC qualification, a unit or units recognised by a Pearson Certificate of Achievement or a full BTEC

qualification.

The use and application of RPL is of particular value to students without formal qualifications, who are either in employment, and are able to evidence their employment through documentation. It enables them to gain all or part of a qualification without having to undertake a formal learning programme.

In cases where RPL is applied, the College will keep awarding organisations like Pearson or any of the College's awarding organisation partners informed. Students will be registered as soon as they formally start to gather evidence. Records of assessment will be maintained, as for any other unit/qualification and certification and claims made according to normal procedures. All relevant evidence will be assessed before assessment decisions are confirmed.

## 6 Responsibilities

Head of Programme is responsible for the quality assurance of the RPL process and, together with Programme Leaders and Internal Verifiers, will provide support for RPL claimants and maintain appropriate records.

## 7 RPL for Unit Exemption

RPL is a learner-centred, voluntary process. Individual student claimants will be offered advice on the nature and range of evidence considered appropriate, to support a claim for credit through RPL, and will be given guidance and support to make a claim.

The process of assessment for RPL is subject to the same quality assurance and monitoring standards as any other form of assessment. The award of credit through RPL will not be distinguished from any other credits awarded.

Assessment methods for RPL are of equal rigour to other assessment methods; they must be fit for purpose and relate to the evidence of learning. Credit may be claimed for any unit through RPL unless the assessment requirements of the unit do not allow this, based on a rationale consistent with the aims and regulations of the framework. The College will only claim for a unit through RPL with agreement from a relevant awarding organisation.

RPL is also of value to students transferring across various learning programmes who have relevant learning but do not hold relevant credits or certificates. This is taken here to include students transferring from one recognised awarding body to another, such as the Kaplan International Year One Business Programme (L4) to the BTEC HND Business Programme (L5). If students are intending to transfer learning from one recognised awarding body to another, the College will need to carry out a mapping exercise to ensure that the learning outcomes of one unit under a particular framework, match the learning outcomes under the other framework. A qualification under one framework may not be regarded adequate to exempt a student for a qualification under another framework and this needs to be checked with the relevant awarding organisation before being applied. For example, Pearson do not accept their previous BTEC

units under the Qualifications Credit Framework (QCF) as equivalent to the same BTEC units under the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) for RPL purposes.

Where units are assessed against assessment criteria or grading criteria, then all evidence is evaluated using the stipulated criteria. In assessing a unit using RPL the assessor must be satisfied that the evidence produced by the student meets the assessment standard established by the learning outcome and its related assessment criteria.

Most often RPL will be used for units. It is acceptable to claim for an entire qualification through RPL although this is not the norm. However, it would be unusual for a student to be able to offer prior achievement that completely matches every aspect of a qualification's assessment requirements.

The prior achievement that would provide evidence of current knowledge, understanding and skills will vary from sector to sector. It will depend on the extent of the experience, technological changes and the nature of the outcome claimed. If the currency of any evidence is in doubt, the assessor will use interview questions to check understanding and competence. Note also that the assessment strategy for each qualification will be adhered to.

The RPL process is not concerned with allowing for exceptional entry to, or exemption from, a programme of study. RPL does allow the recognition of any unit assessed by external assessment, because such units are subject to specific evidence requirements.

RPL is subject to Standards Verification as part of the annual Pearson Quality Assurance mechanism and all other quality audits conducted internally and by external bodies including university and college partners.

## **8 RPL for Entry Requirements**

Applicants for any of the College's programmes of study may be able to make use of RPL in order to meet the specific entry requirements. Where work experience is used, the Programme Leader may request to see evidence of employment in the form of letters of reference, payslips or other documentation. If formal certification from equivalent programmes of study are used as RPL, original documents of certification must be seen and verified by a member of the Academic team under the supervision of the Programme Leader.

The academic team member must conduct an interview with any applicant using RPL to meet entry requirements. During the interview the validity of their experience and/or certification towards meeting the entry requirements of the applicant's desired programme of study will be assessed. A report indicating that experience and/or certification has been mapped to the prerequisites of the desired programme will be recorded along with the applicant's details before a confirmation of acceptance letter is provided to the applicant.