



# POLICY ON THE RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING AND CREDIT TRANSFER

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## **the place of useful learning**

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## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

<i>Accredited Prior Learning</i>	<i>Where previous study with a recognised educational organisation has been formally assessed and can be expressed in terms of credit (with or without grades).</i>
<i>Advanced standing</i>	<i>Applicants who achieve exceptional grades in their Advanced Highers, A-levels or International Baccalaureate (SCQF Level 7) or have successfully completed an HC or HND at college may be considered for Direct Entry normally into year two of a University Honours or Integrated Masters programme. In some circumstances, a student may be awarded advanced standing credits based on their qualifications achieved before starting at the University that can count towards the total number of credits needed, reducing the number of modules a student must take during their studies.</i>
<i>Articulation</i>	<i>Whereby all students who satisfy academic criteria on programmes where formal curriculum matching has taken place are automatically entitled on academic grounds to be admitted with advanced standing to a University programme.</i>
<i>Board of Study</i>	<i>A Faculty's senior academic committee, which makes recommendations directly to Senate and takes some decisions on behalf of Senate via delegated authority.</i>
<i>Direct entry</i>	<i>Where students enter into a University programme normally in the second year, with Advanced Standing.</i>
<i>External Credit transfer</i>	<i>Students may apply for external credit transfer if they have earned credit at, or validated by, another UK higher education institution with degree-awarding powers.</i>
<i>Exemptions</i>	<i>Students who have partially completed a programme from another education provider may be granted an exemption in particular module(s) as long as curriculum matching has taken place and appropriate supporting evidence has been presented.</i>
<i>Experiential Prior Learning</i>	<i>Where informal, but potentially assessable, learning has been acquired through relevant, adequate, and recent experience in a wide variety of settings.</i>

<i>Internal Credit Transfer</i>	<i>Students may apply for internal credit transfer, where they transfer their credits from one Strathclyde programme, usually to pursue a higher award in the same or a similar discipline.</i>
<i>Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body</i>	<i>PSRBs accredit or endorse programmes that meet professional standards, provide a route through to the professions or are recognised by employers.</i>
<i>Recognition of Prior Learning</i>	<i>A method of assessing whether a learner's experience and achievements meet the evidence requirements (ie the standard) of a module.</i>
<i>Senate</i>	<i>The academic governing body within the University, responsible for all academic matters including academic standards and quality.</i>
<i>Work-based Learning</i>	<i>Incorporates learning through work, learning for work and/or learning at work. It consists of authentic structured opportunities for learning which are achieved in a workplace setting or are designed to meet an identified workplace need. This type of learning typically has a dual function of being designed to meet the learning needs of the employees, developing their knowledge, skills and professional behaviours, and also meeting the workforce development needs of the organisation (QAA, 2018)</i>

## **SCOPE**

1. This Policy applies to all taught modules, including taught modules within postgraduate research programmes. All students on these programmes are eligible for RPL and credit transfer, including those students enrolled through collaborative agreements. Any exemptions to the Policy must be approved by the relevant Board of Study and Senate, as detailed within this Policy
2. This Policy deals with how prior learning can be recognised across the University to enable exemption from specific modules of a programme and/or to allow advanced entry leading to a qualification. The Senate has devolved to faculties the management and assessment of RPL and credit transfer within this Policy.
3. The transfer of credits awarded by an overseas degree awarding institution as part of a Study Abroad or Erasmus exchange arrangement are managed through the [Recruitment and International Office and are not within the scope of this Policy](#).
4. The transfer of credits, 'advanced standing' for articulation agreements or other learning within collaborative programmes is managed within each Faculty's Admissions team or equivalent.

5. Students may apply with advanced standing for direct entry into year 2 of an undergraduate honours programme through UCAS. For these individual applications, the University's Admissions and Student Lifecycle Services team will liaise directly with the relevant academic selector to consider the student's qualifications.
6. RPL and credit transfer can only be applied to taught modules and not for modules where the main form of assessment is a dissertation or research project. Only the taught element of a Postgraduate Research award may be granted RPL or credit transfer. For further information regarding the use of existing research and/or published output as part of any examinable part of the research degree, refer to the [Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Students](#).
7. This Policy should be read in conjunction with the [University's Admissions Policy](#), the [General Academic Regulations](#), the [programme specific regulations](#) and the [Equality and Diversity policies](#).

## INTRODUCTION

8. The University of Strathclyde (hereafter the University) recognises that knowledge and skills can be developed in a diverse range of formal and informal learning contexts. The University seeks to accommodate the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and credit transfer as a means of providing appropriate entry to and progression within undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. This commitment to supporting the use of RPL and credit transfer reflects the University's leading role in widening access to and participation in higher education.
9. The University's Policy on RPL has been developed and aligns with QAA Scotland's [Recognition of Prior Learning National Framework for Scottish Higher Education](#)).
10. There is no obligation for any department/school to formally consider requests for RPL or credit transfer, provided it can demonstrate this would not be appropriate to the programme or nature of provision offered (for example, due to the requirements of a professional body).
11. Where an RPL or credit transfer claim can be formally considered, a Board of Study should appoint the Head of Department/School to deliberate on entry to or partial exemption from a programme provided this is done in accordance with relevant University procedures and against criteria defined by an individual programme.

## **DEFINITIONS**

12. This Policy distinguishes between credit transfer and the recognition of prior learning, defined as follows:
  - a. Credit Transfer: where the credits or qualification(s) have been awarded by a UK higher education degree-awarding body in accordance with the relevant higher education qualifications framework. Credit transfer may be internal (eg from BSc in Mathematics to the BA in Management Science) or external (ie from a UK higher education degree-awarding body to Strathclyde). It is only the marks for internal credit transfer that are retained and used in credit weighted average calculations. Marks are not normally retained for either internal or external credit transfer when determining the final degree classification.
  - b. Accredited Prior Learning: where previous study with a recognised educational organisation has been formally assessed and can be expressed in terms of credit.
  - c. Experiential Prior Learning: where non-formal and informal, but nonetheless potentially assessable, learning has been acquired through relevant, adequate, and recent experience.
13. Normally, a student's learning will be handled as either credit transfer or RPL; however, there may be occasions where both need to be considered ie a student has a combination of UK credit and prior learning.
14. For both credit transfer and RPL, the minimum level of assessment is a module. Students cannot apply for credit for or exemption from part of a module.

## **THE APPLICATION OF RPL AND CREDIT TRANSFER IN THE UNIVERSITY**

15. RPL and credit transfer have three distinct purposes in the University. These are:
  - a. To provide evidence to support admission to a programme;
  - b. To allow for direct entry on to a programme; and,
  - c. To allow exemption from specific modules within a programme.
16. For undergraduate programmes, the maximum number of credits for which credit transfer and/ or RPL can be applied is normally 25%, and will not exceed 50% of a four year undergraduate Honours degree subject to Senate approval.

17. For Integrated Masters programmes, the maximum number of credits for which credit transfer and/ or RPL can be applied is normally 20%, and will not exceed 40% of a five year Integrated Masters degree subject to Senate approval.
18. The number of credits for which credit transfer and/ or RPL can be applied to a Postgraduate Taught programme is normally one third of the total number of credits on the programme. For any exceptions to this Faculties must provide a clear rationale as to why such an exception should be considered by Senate.
19. If internal credit transfer is approved by the Board of Study and where appropriate, students will not be asked to 'hand back' any previously earned degree, diploma or certificate until the higher level award has been achieved and conferred.
20. Any programme-specific variations to these regulations must be identified and approved at the point of programme approval or review (for example, some awards may exclude or limit the use of RPL due to Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements).

## **CREDIT TRANSFER**

21. Students may apply for external credit transfer, subject to the number of credits above, provided they have earned credit at a validated UK higher education institution with degree-awarding powers.
22. Applications for credit transfer require academic judgement in determining whether prior module content (for which the student has earned credit) can be mapped onto a module/modules at the University. A student's application should therefore include evidence of credit received, (a transcript or equivalent), plus a module descriptor or syllabus that provides evidence of the learning outcomes achieved.
23. Credit transfer can be applied internally, to modules that have achieved a pass mark. In such instances, the relevant mark will be retained as per [para 12a](#).

## **THE USE AND RE-USE OF CREDIT**

24. Credits may be awarded for prior learning where the level, standard, content and relevance of that learning is appropriate to a particular programme and has normally taken place within a period of five years. In particular, credit may be awarded via RPL for:
  - a. individual modules, where it can be demonstrated that the learning outcomes for the module through knowledge, understanding, and/or skills that they already possess are met as a result of prior learning; and/or,

- b. for a full year of study (i.e. 120 credits), where the applicant or student can demonstrate that they meet the learning outcomes for the relevant year of study through knowledge, understanding, and/or skills that they already possess as a result of prior learning.
25. Credit for a completed award can only be used to seek advanced standing on to a programme leading to an award at a higher level. Credit for a completed award cannot be used towards another award at the same level, as this would constitute double-counting of credit, unless the following criteria are met:
- a. The programme is in a different subject, vocational or professional area to their prior award at undergraduate or postgraduate level; or,
  - b. The award is at [SCQF](#) level 11 (Masters level) and enables the student to advance in their existing subject in a new or specialist direction.
26. A student granted RPL credit cannot subsequently re-use that credit towards a further award offered at the University, unless the student is granted credit for prior learning as part of a programme with a direct progression route.
27. In line with SCQF guidance, credits awarded are considered to be of the same value as those gained within the University. However, as per [para 12a](#) the credits are normally accepted as ungraded and therefore do not contribute to the final degree classification on any programme.

## RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

28. Matching prior learning to the learning outcomes of a programme or module is an academic judgement and as such departments and schools are responsible for making and recording detailed decisions on RPL through their Board of Study.
29. The Board of Study may, with the approval of Senate, admit applicants and/or approve exemption from part of a programme by RPL provided this is done in accordance with University procedures.
30. An applicant can be accepted for a programme or awarded an exemption for a particular module where the applicant or student can evidence that their accredited or experiential learning matches the appropriate learning outcomes *and* meets the following criteria:
- a. **Relevant** – the learning gained provides the applicant with knowledge and skills which are relevant to the programme;
  - b. **Sufficient** – the learning gained from accredited study is of an equivalent academic level to the standard entry requirement or content of a module or



programme, and that the breadth and depth of prior experiential learning is considered to be sufficient to demonstrate the applicant's potential;

- c. **Verifiable** – the evidence provided can be authenticated as being the outcome of the learner's own effort;
- d. **Recent** – the learning meets the University's requirement for recent study (i.e. normally within 5 years of application). However, Heads of Department or Schools may adjust the restrictions on the recency of learning cited in any claim for RPL in line with their judgement on demands of specific programmes, particularly where a qualification is followed by a period of related practice.

31. Where RPL is routinely used in the admissions process for a programme, detailed information will be available to applicants about the evidence they will be required to provide and how this will be used in the admissions process.

32. It is essential that an applicant who wishes to make an application based on RPL discusses this with the relevant department/ school admissions staff **before** an application is submitted.

33. The University recognises the implications of granting applications for RPL where professional and regulatory bodies impose any particular restrictions on the use of RPL and this will be reflected in the handling of RPL applications within departments/ schools.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Senate	The University's governing academic body with overall responsibility for ensuring the integrity of the University's awards.
Board of Study	To ensure all decisions regarding admission of applicants and/ or approving exemption from part of a course by credit transfer and/ or RPL are undertaken in adherence with the relevant University policies and regulations.
Department/ School	Responsible for ensuring all decisions taken in relation to RPL and/ or credit transfer are consistent with the University's regulations and are reported to the Board of Study.
Directorate of Student Experience	Responsible for recording RPL for Entry and credit transfer at university level and notifying applicant if RPL awarded.
Quality Enhancement and Assurance Team	To provide advice on the regulatory aspects of RPL.

## APPEALS

34. Neither RPL nor credit transfer can be used as an extenuating circumstance for underachievement in subsequent assessments.
35. There can be no appeal against the finding of a department/school in an RPL or credit transfer application. However, students/applicants are able to pursue a complaint through the [University's Complaints Handling Procedure](#) if they believe their claim has not been processed in accordance with this Policy and related University policies.

## **APPENDICES**

1. [Appendix A](#) sets out a series of helpful external resources that can be used when considering RPL/credit transfer.
2. [Appendix B](#) contains the University's RPL/Credit Transfer claim form to be completed by students and applicants seeking to claim RPL and/or Credit Transfer.

## Appendix A – Useful Resources

1. **QAA Scotland RPL resources, including RPL National Framework in Scotland**  
<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/development-projects/recognition-of-prior-learning>
2. **SCQF Guide to RPL**  
<https://scqf.org.uk/guide-to-rpl/>
3. **SCQF Handbook (section 4 considers RPL)**  
[https://scqf.org.uk/media/1125/scqf\\_handbook\\_web\\_final\\_2015.pdf](https://scqf.org.uk/media/1125/scqf_handbook_web_final_2015.pdf)
4. **Scottish National Qualifications: Old vs New**  
<https://scqf.org.uk/media/1104/old-v-new.pdf>
5. **Qualifications can cross boundaries: Guide to comparing qualifications in the UK and Ireland**  
[https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaas/news-and-events/qualifications-can-cross-boundaries-guide-to-comparing-qualifications-in-the-uk-and-ireland.pdf?sfvrsn=3715c981\\_4](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaas/news-and-events/qualifications-can-cross-boundaries-guide-to-comparing-qualifications-in-the-uk-and-ireland.pdf?sfvrsn=3715c981_4)

## Appendix B: Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)/ Credit Transfer Application Form

This form should be completed by University of Strathclyde students or applicants who intend to make a claim for RPL and approved by the relevant Academic Selector. Completed forms must be typed and submitted via email to:

- Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences: [HaSS-pg-enquiries@strath.ac.uk](mailto:HaSS-pg-enquiries@strath.ac.uk)
- Faculty of Engineering: [eng-enquiries@strath.ac.uk](mailto:eng-enquiries@strath.ac.uk)
- Faculty of Science: [science-enquiries@strath.ac.uk](mailto:science-enquiries@strath.ac.uk)
- Strathclyde Business School: [sbs-advisor@strath.ac.uk](mailto:sbs-advisor@strath.ac.uk)

Further information on the use of RPL/ credit transfer at the University of Strathclyde can be found in the Policy on Credit Transfer and RPL [[insert link to policy](#)].

<b>Name:</b>	
<b>Student or applicant number (if known):</b>	
<b>Email address:</b>	
<b>Intended programme</b>	
<b>Level of entry</b>	
<b>Expected start date:</b>	

<b>Module code(s) and title(s) you would like to claim RPL and/ credit transfer towards:</b> <i>Please consult the University of Strathclyde <a href="#">programme catalogue</a> and/or contact the appropriate Programme Leader for assistance</i>	
<b>Module code(s)</b>	<b>Module title(s)</b>

**Formal qualifications fully or partly completed (if any):**

<u>Qualification title</u>	<u>SCQF Level</u>	<u>Subject Area</u>	<u>Place of study</u>	<u>Date achieved</u>

**Details of any relevant learning gained through life and/or work experiences (if any):**

*This is experiential (either informal or non-formal) learning. If you choose to submit a claim involving this type of evidence, the member of University staff assigned to assess your claim will be in touch to discuss the information and supporting evidence that may be required to process your claim. .*

**Please summarise the evidence you are submitting to support your claim (e.g. copies of qualifications, module descriptors, transcripts and/or CV, references):**

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<b>Student signature</b>	
<b>Dated</b>	

Personal information which you supply to the University of Strathclyde will be used to make a decision on your application. The University of Strathclyde is the data controller for your information. Further information on how your information is used and your rights is available on [online](#).

**To be completed by University staff:**

<b>Value of credits and level</b>	
Please record the number of credits and the level at which they apply for each instance of attainment. This information should be captured for each instance of module and/ or area of experiential learning that is being used to award credit.	
<b>Value</b>	<b>Level</b>

<b>Approver's signature</b>	
<b>Title</b>	
<b>Dated</b>	