

# Recognition of Prior Learning Policy

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## 1. Background

Nescot has long been committed to excelling in support for learning and teaching and to widening participation in higher education.

The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Scheme seeks to recognise and value prior learning and help students find their level and make the best use of their learning experiences. It provides a framework to bring together all RPL provision and ensure equity of treatment across subject disciplines.

The RPL Scheme is designed to encourage achievers to participate in higher education by enabling them to utilise prior knowledge and skills appropriately against the Learning Outcomes of their chosen programme.

## 2. Principles

The RPL Scheme enables an individual, or group of students to incorporate previous relevant theoretical and/or practical learning into a programme of study and be accredited for this learning. Accreditation is a means of considering all relevant formal certificated learning and experiential learning for credit towards a named award. Units of learning, theoretical or practical that are accepted for accreditation must be of compatible value to the programme content and academic level. The smallest unit of accreditation or recognition will be a module. RPL applications cannot be made retrospectively in the event that a module has been taken and failed.

The methods and processes of acquisition of knowledge and skills may be different but the learning outcomes must be seen as substantially equivalent to those identified in the approved award. This equivalence can be claimed against a level of study using the level learning outcomes and/or individual module(s) using module learning outcomes and applies to both specific and general credit. The RPL Scheme will only accredit prior learning where the College award is of an equal or higher level than that previously studied.

When course teams and the Academic Registrar review the evidence they must satisfy the following criteria:

**Validity** – evidence must be provided that the prior learning for which the applicant is claiming credit is relevant to the programme they have applied for at Nescot College. The applicant must demonstrate that there is an appropriate match in both level and content between the previous studies and the Nescot College module or modules for which they are seeking accreditation.

**Currency** – prior learning must have been gained sufficiently recent to make it still of value. The RPL Scheme will recognise formal certificated or experiential learning which has occurred up to five years prior to the start date of the course. Articulation and Advance Standing Agreements will be reviewed periodically and when there are significant changes to either institution's courses.

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**Sufficiency** – applicants must provide enough evidence to fully demonstrate they have achieved the credit currently being claimed.

**Authenticity** – evidence must be provided that relates to the applicants own efforts and should be able to be verified as such.

It is the applicant's responsibility to gather evidence for any claim.

A maximum of 30 credits from a completed award can be used to count towards a qualification at the same level. So a student with a BSc can only reuse a maximum of 30 credits from that award towards another BSc and a student with a Masters can only reuse a maximum of 30 credits from that award towards another Masters qualification.

However, a student may seek to use credits previously gained in order to contribute to a higher level award or to an award that is larger in terms of the number of credits. For example:

- A student with a Certificate of Higher Education could use the credits from that award towards a honours degree (if appropriate);
- A student with a Postgraduate Certificate could use the credits from that award towards a Postgraduate Diploma or Masters (if appropriate).

Prior learning can only be used for accreditation purposes once. Students who have been accredited for specific prior learning at Nescot College or another institution cannot apply for accreditation of this specific learning again.

No student should be disadvantaged whether through progression opportunities or award classification through following a Recognition of Prior Learning route. Some College courses are accredited by professional bodies and in some instances this may prevent the College from accrediting prior learning.

It should be noted that Recognition for prior learning (certified, experiential or uncertified), is not permitted at level 6 of a Bachelor's Degree or for the thesis/dissertation module, where students are expected to complete 120 credits in order to gain the award.

### **3. Types of Recognised Prior Learning**

Admission to the first year without any module exemptions of a higher education course is not considered within RPL as this is considered in recruitment and admissions policies and covered by the QAA Quality Code chapter B2<sup>1</sup>.

There are a number of instances where either individual applicant claims for RPL, or the College uses RPL for a group of applicants for example:

- An individual applicant<sup>2</sup> may claim for RPL before they enrol on their course.
- A group of applicants, for example from a corporate client, may apply for accreditation of their learning.

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<sup>1</sup> QAA (2013) UK Quality Code for HE 'Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education' Gloucester: QAA

<sup>2</sup> QAA (2013) UK Quality Code for HE 'Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and Recognition of Prior Learning' Gloucester: QAA

- The College may formalise accreditation of a qualification from an external body (such as Edexcel).
- The College may accredit prior study or qualification on a particular course from another educational institution<sup>3</sup>

These **pre- course enrolment** RPL claims are dealt with by admissions or course tutors/ leaders using the principles above.

A student may, once commenced their studies, decide that they have a case to be accredited for a module(s) on their course. These **post- course enrolment** RPL claims are dealt with by the course leader, again, using the principles above.

### **Terms:**

Credit Transfer is the mechanism whereby individual students who have successfully completed a level, stage or module(s) in an HE course at another institution may apply to transfer that credit to an appropriate course at the College.

Advanced Standing is the process by which students are advanced on a course through APCL or APEL.

Articulation is the process by which the College makes the judgement whether students from another institution are admitted to a course with advanced standing.

**Articulation Agreements** are the means by which cohorts of students on a particular course and institution, who satisfy academic criteria, are automatically entitled to be admitted with advanced standing to a specified course at Nescot College. Articulation Agreements are formally approved via an agreement between the College and the institution or approved as a progression agreement at a course approval event.

**Advanced Standing Agreements** are the means by which Nescot College agree by prior arrangement that students who are either on a particular course and institution (who satisfy academic criteria), or have passed a qualification from a particular awarding body, or have been accredited with specific learning, may apply to transfer an agreed stage of a particular programme of study and/or be accredited with certain modules (subject to general admissions considerations, for example, visas and English language requirements). Advanced Standing Agreements are formally approved by Nescot College.

**Accreditation of prior certificated learning (APCL)** is the means by which previously assessed and certificated learning is considered and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes. This learning may or may not be credit-bearing.

**Accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL)** is the means by which learning achieved outside education or training systems is assessed and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes. Credit is awarded not on the experience itself but on what the student has learned from that experience. Therefore, there has to be submission of an assessment of this learning reflecting the learning outcomes of the level/module(s) claimed for accreditation.

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<sup>3</sup> QAA (2013) UK Quality Code for HE 'Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others' Gloucester: QAA

#### **4. Scope**

This policy applies specifically to those programmes validated by the Open University and Higher National (Pearson) programmes.

Normally a maximum of 50% of credits for any award may be set against the Recognition of Prior Learning Scheme. Exceptions have to be approved by the relevant course teams who will in turn forward minutes covering these approvals to the College Quality Committee. The scope of RPL is subject to the specific requirements of the approved course, any professional, regulatory and statutory bodies and the discretion of the relevant Faculty.

The maximum volume of RPL is indicated in the table below with examples of approved exceptions to the usual 50% maximum. This is for guidance only and does not constitute an entitlement. Applicants would be required to claim for RPL unless covered by Advanced Standing or Articulation Agreements.

## Maximum Volume of RPL on Nescot College Courses

Award	Credit Required for Award	Max credit via RPL	Minimum Credits to be taken on Nescot College approved course
Grad Dip	120	60	60 credits at Level 6 or above
Grad Cert	60	30	30 credits at Level 6 or above
Honours Degree	360	240	120 credits with at least 90 at Level 6
Ordinary Degree	300	150	150 at Level 6
FdA/FdSc	240	120	120 credits with at least 60 at Level 5
DipHE	240	120	120 credits with at least 60 at Level 5
HND	240	120	120 credits including at least 60 at Level 5
HNC	120	60	60 credits at Level 4 or above
CertHE	120	60	60 credits at Level 4 or above
MEng MSci	480	240	240 credits with at least 90 credits at level 7
Masters	180	20	60 credits at Level 7 (including the Dissertation)
PgDip	120	60	60 credits at Level 7
PgCert	60	30	30 credits at Level 7
Credit bearing doctoral awards (e.g. DBA, EdD, DClinPsy)	540	180	360 credits at level 8

Please note that in line with Open University regulations for validated awards section 22.4, Recognition for prior learning (certified, experiential or uncertified) is not permitted at level 6 of a Bachelor's Degree or for the thesis/dissertation module, where students are expected to complete 120 credits in order to gain the award.

## 5. Processes

Chapter B6 'Assessment of students and the recognition of prior learning' of the QAA UK Quality Code states that 'judgements of student performance are based on the extent to which the student is able to demonstrate achievement of the corresponding intended learning outcomes'<sup>4</sup>. Academic judgement is at the core of these decisions.

Each RPL decision is arrived at on a **course by course basis by mapping** (see appendix 1) either the stage, or level, or module learning outcomes (according to the type of application). Mappings for group RPL will be documented in the associated advanced standing or articulation agreements and individual RPL will be recorded on the notes pages of ProMonitor (the college's student information repository), by the relevant member of staff (usually course or admissions tutor).

All applications for RPL should be made **as early as possible** – before a module commences is preferable. If the module has already commenced, the module/course leader will need to advise the student that applications can be rejected and therefore there may be a need to continue with module attendance/learning while the application is being processed. All RPL claims must be made in the English Language and where necessary the student will need to provide translations of evidence for the claim. If the decision is that the learning (certificated or experiential) has not met the learning outcomes the student should continue to study the module and undertake the full assessment in the usual way.

For students who have progressed to an Honours degree from another award of this College (e.g. Foundation Degree, HNC or HND) credit awarded will carry the marks achieved and these will be included in the calculation of the Honours degree. For all other instances, credit awarded through the RPLS will be ungraded and will be recorded as the pass mark of 40%E for undergraduates (50%E for postgraduates) on the students' profile. This mark will not be taken into account when calculated the average mark for classification purposes.

### Advanced Standing and Articulation Agreements

Applications for Advanced Standing and Articulation from other educational institutions will usually be considered by the College at the Board of Studies (BoS) as chaired by DoF HE and Academic Registrar. A list of Articulation/Advanced Standing agreements will be held within the relevant Faculty. Students who apply to the College under these arrangements are not required to complete an individual APL application.

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<sup>4</sup> QAA (2013) UK Quality Code for HE Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality. Chapter B6 'Assessment of students and recognition of prior learning'. Gloucester: QAA (page 3).

## **Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL)**

Students applying for APCL should provide copies (sight of originals may be requested for verification) of the certificated learning to the admissions/ course leader. This Programme Leader in consultation with a member of the Quality Team will then check that the learning outcomes from the certificated prior learning align with the learning outcomes of the module/level/stage of the Nescot College course. This will usually be considered via a BoS and records kept by the Quality Office.

## **Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)**

Students applying APEL should discuss with the admissions tutor or course leader the specific evidence of the claim and submit an assessment determined by the admissions tutor/ course leader. This may be in the form of a portfolio. The assessment brief will be submitted for approval through the usual for the application and assessment. A clear indication should be made at the front of the submission indicating the mapping of the learning outcomes of the claimed module(s)/ level to the evidence of experiential learning submitted. These will be assessed by the course/ module leader as pass/fail (ungraded) and if passed will be recorded as the pass mark of 40%E (50%E postgraduate) on the students' profile. This mark will not be taken into account when calculated the average mark for classification purposes. The submitted assessments will be subject to the usual Faculty moderation and external examining processes.

These assessments will be retained by the relevant department and made available to the relevant award or module external examiner.

In some cases, where the course is subject to specific professional, regulatory and statutory bodies there may be a further Faculty based approval for any claims of RPL.

There is usually no cost to the student for Advanced Standing, Credit Transfer, Articulation and Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL). However, where there is extensive scrutiny of non-standard certificated evidence there may be a fee charged.

Due to the assessment element of Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) there is a charge of 40% of the module fee.

## **6. Outgoing students**

All students who exit the College either upon completion of their intended award or part way through a programme are issued with a HEAR which details the modules taken, their credit value and the marks for each element of assessment associated with the module, the award gained (including intermediate awards achieved).

Programme specifications are available from the College's website which current and ex- students can access to support admission to another institution. The decision to accept credit from Nescot College is at the discretion of the receiving institution.

## **7. Appeals**

In accordance with the College's student appeals regulations, an appeal can only be made against an RPL decision on the basis that there was a material error or irregularity in the process.

The process for appealing against an RPL decision will be as per the Complaints and Appeals Policy available on the College Web Site. Open University students should note the final section related to their awards and this process.

**Equality issues have been taken into account during the development of this policy and all protected characteristics have been considered as part of the Equality Analysis undertaken.**

## **Appendix 1: Nescot College RPL Evidence Document**

### **Nescot College Detail**

Name of student:

Student ID:

Course Code:

Programme Applied For:

### **Previous Institute Details**

Registration Number:

Previous Institute:

Awarding Body:

Programme Studied:

<b>Units/Modules Undertaken at Previous HEI</b>	<b>Mapping to Programme of Study at Nescot College</b>	<b>RPL Awarded (✓ or ✗)</b>

<b>Checklist</b>	<b>Initials</b>	<b>Date</b>
RPL Interview Notes		
Portfolio Seen		
Copy of Transcript		
Copy of Certificate		

**Checked by:**

Head of Centre:

Date:

Head of Quality:

Date:

Academic Registrar:

Date:

<b>Checklist</b>	<b>Initials</b>	<b>Date</b>
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**Checked by:**

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