**Recognition of Prior (Experiential) Learning Policy**

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| **Responsibility for Policy:** | Registrar and Chief Operating Officer |
| **Relevant to:** | All LJMU Staff including Collaborative Partners, Students and Applicants |
| **Approved by:** | Academic Board 28 June 2017 |
| **Responsibility for Document Review:** | Registrar and Chief Operating Officer |
| **Date introduced:** | September 2015 |
| **Date(s) modified:** | September 2016, June 2017, May 2019,  September 2020, November 2022, March 2023 |
| **Next Review Date:** | September 2024 |

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| **RELEVANT DOCUMENTS** |
| * Education Skills Funding Agency guide for Apprenticeships * Office for Students regulatory framework for higher education and conditions of registration * Ofsted’s Further Education and Skills Handbook. |
| **RELATED POLICIES & DOCUMENTS** |
| * RP(E)L Handbook * LJMU Academic Framework |

**Liverpool John Moores University Recognition of Prior Learning Policy**

**1.0 BACKGROUND**

This policy outlines how formal recognition of learning gained elsewhere, where appropriate, can lead to the award of credit by Liverpool John Moores University in respect of that learning. Within a credit-based system, credit transfer and the recognition of prior learning provide greater flexibility in admitting students to university awards and it links prior learning experiences to current programmes of study so that the student gains maximum benefit from their studies. The recognition of prior learning also enables LJMU students to obtain credit for study completed as part of the University’s Study Abroad scheme. *The policy has been updated to include a new category, Recognition of Prior Learning and Experience (RPLE), which is only relevant to Apprenticeship programmes, and to make changes to the governance structure with regard to the approval of all RPEL claims.*

**2.0 PRINCIPLES**

This policy aligns with the expectations and core practices of the *Education Skills Funding Agency guide for Apprenticeships, the Office for Students regulatory framework for higher education and conditions of registration and Ofsted’s Further Education and Skills Handbook*, ensuring that the assessment of claims for credit by the recognition of prior learning are reliable, fair and transparent.

Decisions about the recognition of prior learning take account of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (FHEQ)*.

Decisions about the recognition of prior learning are assessment decisions, and when part of the admissions process are not merely admission decisions.

The Academic Framework Regulations outline the maximum amount of credit from prior learning / credit transfer that can count toward LJMU awards.

Decisions taken in respect of claims for credit transfer / prior learning are informed by the following criteria:

* The credit must be for learning that is up to date, normally within 5 years of the start of the student beginning study on the programme to which the applicant is applying;
* The credit must be for learning that is relevant to the ‘destination programme’ and which can be demonstrated as equivalent to the learning outcomes of the module, group of modules or level that it replaces;
* The credit involved must match the level and volume of the learning that it replaces;
* The principle of progression in award should underpin the re-use of credit, in which new learning should normally be at a higher level than any credit gained from prior learning.

*In addition, for Apprentice programmes the award of Recognition of Prior Learning and Experience (RPLE) has been introduced, which is a new category for Apprenticeship programmes only, is permitted after assessment but the award of RPLE will not result in the release of credit.*

Good practice in the management of assessment applies equally to processes for the RP(E)L: transparency, fairness, consistency, reliability, and validity.

The principles of internal and external moderation apply for all claims for the Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL).

**3.0 DEFINITIONS RELATED TO RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING**

Credit transfer

Where credit or (a) qualification(s) has/have been awarded by a UK higher education degree-awarding body in accordance with the relevant framework for higher education qualifications, the FHEQ.

Recognition of prior learning (RPL)

Learning that has been certificated. Prior certificated learning relates to prior learning, such as professional development awards or employment-based awards, which is at higher education level but which has not led to the award of UK credits or UK qualifications positioned on the relevant higher education qualifications framework.

Recognition of prior experiential learning (RPEL)

Informal uncertificated learning through experience, whether gained through work, voluntary activity or at home.

Recognition of prior (experiential) learning (RP(E)L)

An umbrella term, covering the wide range of an individual’s prior learning, whether certificated or uncertificated.

Recognition of Prior Learning and Experience (RPLE)

*Only permitted for Apprenticeship programmes, RPLE is a process which enables apprentices map previously acquired knowledge, skills and behaviours against the relevant Apprenticeship standard. Credit is not released, but a reduction in off the job learning hours or a reduced programme cost could result from such a claim.*

Advanced standing (also referred to as advanced entry)

Admission to a programme at a stage other than the initial stage, on the basis that a student so admitted is exempted from part of the programme, owing to equivalent prior learning that can be certified or evidenced.

Articulation arrangements

A process whereby all students who satisfy academic criteria on one programme are automatically entitled (on academic grounds) to be admitted with advanced standing to a subsequent part or year of a programme of a degree- awarding body.

General credit

The total amount of credit attributed to a specified learning outcome at a specific level on validation or accreditation. General credit is given for evidenced learning which is assigned to a set of learning outcomes such as those that comprise a group of modules or a complete level of a programme.

Specific credit

Given when the outcomes achieved in the certificated or uncertificated learning match the learning outcomes of specific modules in the programme. All outcomes in the given module must have been achieved to at least the level which would be accepted in order to receive a pass by standard methods of delivery and assessment (e.g. 40%).

**4.0 USE OF RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING**

Credit transfer/RP(E)L may be used by individuals as:

1. A means of gaining entry to award programmes part way through the programme, thus shortening the time required to complete a programme of study (‘Advanced Standing’).
2. A means of obtaining LJMU credit following the completion of a university approved period of Study Abroad.
3. Evidence to transfer/gain credits for individual modules.
4. *Evidence of prior attainment of knowledge, skills and behaviours (for Apprenticeship programmes only).*

Matching prior learning to programmes of study requires an assessment of the degree of match between an individual’s learning and either:

1. entry criteria and requirements *and/or*
2. programme and level learning outcomes *and/or*
3. individual module learning outcomes
4. *knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) outlined in relevant Apprenticeship standards*

**5.0 SUMMARY OF PROCESS**

**5.1 Applicant requesting advanced entry (‘advanced standing’) on the basis of credit transfer.**

Applications for advanced entry to the University on the basis of credit transfer are considered by the designated authority (Programme Leaders/Admissions Tutors) and any approval is authorised by *the Chair of the University Recognition Group (URG)* as part of the admissions process. Such approval requires formal verification that the relevant learning outcomes have been met via prior learning and that the applicant has provided suitable evidence as part of the application process. Decisions resulting in the transfer of credit are reported to the *URG*.

**5.2 Applicant requesting advanced entry (‘advanced standing’) on the basis of RP(E)L.**

Applicants with qualifications that are not recognised by the UK FHEQ will be considered and decisions determined by the *URG*. Such a claim, as part of the application process, must be based on recent learning with clear equivalence to the learning outcomes of the proposed award programme and to authoritative external benchmarking. Evidence of general experience and learning at an equivalent level may considered appropriate for accelerated entry and pre-requisite knowledge in some key areas may be deemed essential for some award programmes.

**5.3 Applicant requesting RPEL (experiential learning).**

The applicant is referred to the relevant *Assistant Academic Registrar*, who refers the applicant to the Programme Leader. The applicant completes an RPEL claim form. With the guidance of the Programme Leader, the applicant produces evidence for the claim using a portfolio and mapping document. The portfolio and mapping document should clearly demonstrate evidence of learning at the appropriate level.

The claim is assessed by an Academic Assessor, who has not been directly involved in advising the applicant on the claim. The Academic Assessor completes the appropriate documentation, returns it and other claim material to the *Assistant Academic Registrar* following completion of the moderation process. For claims of this nature moderation will include the programme External Examiner. The claim and recommendations are submitted to the *URG* for approval.

**5.4 Applicant requesting RPLE.**

*The process will include apprenticeship applicants undertaking a self-assessment followed by an interview with the LJMU tutor, that will compare the individual’s existing knowledge, skills, and behaviours with those required in the relevant apprenticeship standard to achieve occupational competence. The finalised agreement on the amount of RPLE to be awarded must be endorsed by the apprentice employer. It will then result in an individual training plan (ILP) that accounts for relevant prior learning and experience, reducing the content, duration, and cost where training is not required.*

*Apprentice applicants can apply for all types of credit for prior learning at the time of application. The assessment will establish that the individual is eligible for the apprenticeship, by meeting the minimum requirements for off-the-job training and duration, which are defined in the funding rules. It may identify that an Apprenticeship may not be appropriate for an individual because their level of prior learning and experience breaches the minimum requirements; therefore, a higher-level Apprenticeship or another type of training could be more appropriate for the individual. Applicants and their employers will be advised about this before an offer is made.*

*The process requires the Apprentice applicant to undertake a self-assessment of their competence which will be discussed in a skill scanning meeting and the level of competency assessed by the LJMU tutor and then confirmed by the apprentice employer. The LJMU tutor will advise the relevant persons within LJMU about the amount of RPLE to be awarded.*

**5.5 Timescales for all RP(E)L claims.**

The assessment of all RP(E)L claims must be completed in time to enrol the applicant on the correct level of the programme concerned, usually by the start of teaching. The chair of the *University Recognition Group* is able to take chair’s actions if this is required.

However, for *Apprenticeship programmes, the assessment of all types of prior learning and experience will be undertaken at the application stage (before an offer to be accepted onto a programme is made) because a successful application could lead to:*

* *The reduction in weeks for training due to prior learning*
* *The reduction in price, in whole pounds, for training due to prior learning*
* *Whether the applicant’s prior learning is at a level that will preclude them from releasing funding from ESFA to study the programme*
* *An increase in fee if the knowledge, skills, and behaviours achieved by the apprenticeship applicant are not sufficient and further assessment is required.*

*All assessments for RPLE will be submitted to the URG for endorsement, before being submitted to the Finance team to undertake any re-costing of programme fee activity.*

**6.0 THE AVOIDANCE OF DOUBLE COUNTING**

In some cases, claims for **uncertificated** learning may, in effect, be for learning which is to be credited through credit transfer or certificated learning. For example, an engineering student gaining entry to level 5 may seek additional credit for learning resulting from work-based experience occurring whilst undertaking HNC studies, which has already gained credit. If the learning outcomes for the claim are equivalent to those in the level 4 modules to be credited, then the claim should be denied as this would represent double-counting of the same learning.

The principle of progression in award should underpin the re-use of credit, in which new learning should normally be at a higher level than any credit gained from prior learning.

**7.0 STUDENT REQUESTING TRANSFER BETWEEN PROGRAMMES**

Where an articulated progression route has been agreed (for example, when a LJMU-validation Foundation Degree provides a pathway onto level 6 of a LJMU honours programme), it is not necessary for the student to apply for credit transfer/RPL on the LJMU programme. It is the student’s right to continue with their study provided that they have met the progression criteria. A record of such students and their credit transfer must be kept and reported to the *University Recognition Group*.

Students with LJMU credits and awards who transfer onto programmes within LJMU, or progress to another LJMU award, should have details of their prior study on their student record.

*For Apprentices, this should also be recorded on the apprenticeship portal.*

**8.0 STUDENT REQUESTING THE AWARD OF CREDIT FOLLOWING THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF A UNIVERSITY ‘STUDY ABROAD’ PROGRAMME**

Prior to any period of ‘Study Abroad’, the student is assigned to an Advisor (normally a member of the LJMU programme team), who supports the student in developing a Learning Agreement and associated mapping document that demonstrates an equivalence of learning between the proposed programme of Study Abroad and the equivalent period of study at LJMU. Where the period of Study Abroad is to replace taught modules at LJMU, the mapping should be completed at module level. Where the period of Study Abroad is to be completed in addition to taught modules at LJMU, the mapping may be completed against programme-level learning outcomes.

Prior to a period of Study Abroad, the Programme Leader must ascertain that there is parity of marking between LJMU and the partner institution.

Learning Agreements are considered and approved by both the LJMU Programme Leader and appropriate *Assistant Academic Registrar*, and are then endorsed by the *University Recognition Group* in advance of the Learning Agreement being signed by the students and the Assistant Academic Registrar.

Following the successful completion of a period of Study Abroad, the student submits an application for the award of LJMU credit using the appropriate application form.

Each application is considered by the Study Abroad Team. Unless the Study Aboard Team is unable to establish parity in marking undertaken elsewhere then both credit and authoritative marks shall be accepted (regulation A2.3) and endorsed by the URG.

**9.0 MARKS AND CREDIT**

Credit awarded for learning from outside of the University is not graded, with the exception of credit obtained from a University’s Study Abroad programme.

**10.0 REPORTS TO BOARDS OF EXAMINERS**

All RP(E)L credit, however awarded, is reported to the Board of Examiners and a summary will be reported to the *Academic Quality and Standards Committee*.

**11.0 ROLE DESCRIPTIONS**

*Assistant Academic Registrar*

*The Assistant Academic Registrar* gives initial advice on the nature of RP(E)L, its use within the context of the Academic Framework, and further information on the procedure.

Academic Assessor

The Assessors will study the material produced for the claim, will often interview the applicant and may also require any further evidence they deem necessary. This might include a presentation or performance, or even (as a last resort) an unseen examination.

**12.0 GOVERNANCE**

The URG is a sub-group of Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC). The URG will meet regularly, at published times, and additionally if required and report to AQSC on claims received and credit transferred or awarded. Credit transfer and the award of credit from prior learning are also reported to the Assessment Board.

Membership

*Membership of URG is:*

* *Chief Operating Officer and Registrar/Academic Registrar who will act as co-chair*
* *Assistant Academic Registrars*
* *Head of Degree Apprenticeships (or alternate)*
* *Admissions Team Representative*
* *A representative from each Faculty*
* *PQiP representatives as required*
* *URG Secretary*
* *Other members co-opted as required- i.e. Programme Leaders, Link Tutors, relevant Faculty Administrators*

Quoracy

*The meeting will be deemed quorate when attended by:*

* *Chair or alternate*
* *One AAR*
* *Five Faculty Representatives (alternates are allowed)*

Terms of Reference

*The terms of reference of the URG are as follows:*

* *To consider and decide on claims for the recognition of prior certificated learning from individual students, where it is not possible to transfer credit.*
* *To consider and decide on claims for the recognition of prior experiential learning from individual students.*
* *To approve articulation arrangements/advanced standing.*
* *Report to the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (AQSC), via the University External Examining Panel, with a synopsis of claims received and credit transferred or awarded and to identify any policy issues arising.*
* *To provide Boards of Examiners with details of credits transferred or awarded via RPL, RPEL, RP(E)L and RPLE.*
* *To receive and record confirmation of marks that have been achieved as part of a study abroad programme by the Study Aboard Team.*
* *To receive reports of the amount of RPLE that has been awarded to Apprenticeship applicants and whether this could result in reduced course fees and/or off the job learning hours required for specific Apprentices.*
* *Report to the Finance team the recommendations for fee reductions or increases for individual apprentice applicants.*
* *To formally confirm that all apprentice applicant skills scanning assessments have been signed off by LJMU tutors and workplace mentors.*
* *To develop updates and amendments to LJMU policies and processes related to RPEL when required.*

*Exceptionally, claims for credit for prior learning may be approved by the Chair and one other member of the URG. All such exceptional approvals must be listed specifically in the report to the AQSC. In considering claims for credit transfer / RP(E)L in relation to partner provision, the link tutor should advise on the process and on the academic suitability of claims.*

**APPENDIX 1**

**Application for Recognition of Prior Learning**

*To be completed by Admissions or Faculties as appropriate.*

Applicant name:

Student number:

Programme applied for:

Requested entry point (e.g. level 5):

Previous qualification (please give name of award and number of credits):

Is the study ongoing? (Yes/no):

Location of study:

Awarding institution:

Date of award (calendar year):

Is the certificate or transcript appended? (Yes/no):

If the award is over 5 years old, the student should provide evidence of the currency their learning (e.g. employment in a related field, CPD activity, etc). Is evidence attached? (Yes/no/not applicable):

If the award is from an overseas institution, a UK ENIC statement of comparability should be obtained. Is this appended? (Yes/no/not applicable):

If this claim is for an individual module, please give details:

If the claim is against a validated *(i.e. specified in the Programme Specification)* entry qualification (e.g. HND in cognate subject), please include details here:

***Evaluation of evidence – to be completed by Programme Leader***

The purpose of this evaluation is to ensure that the certificated prior learning is equivalent to the learning the student would have obtained on the LJMU programme. In addition to academic content, this equivalence needs to include level and volume of study – the incoming learning must be at the same level (or higher) than on the LJMU programme, and have the same (or higher) volume of credits. Where the qualification is not from a UK HEI, additional evidence (such as UK ENIC statement of comparability) may need to be assessed to ensure that the level and credit volume is equivalent.

*Depending on the nature of the claim, either complete section 1, or sections 2 and 3, and, if appropriate, section 4.*

1. Validated entry qualifications:
2. Level and volume of learning:
3. Equivalence of learning:
4. Currency of learning:

*Please complete the following statement to indicate whether you recommend approval at URG.*

I have carried out a thorough evaluation of the evidence supplied and:

1. Recommend approval of this claim (yes/no):
2. Recommend rejection of this claim (yes/no):

*Please type your name and date below. This will serve as an electronic signature.*

Full name:

Today’s date:

*Please now indicate the claim category on the following page.*

## **Claim Category**

*Please indicate the claim category by highlighting the text. Please note that for some categories, the programme leader may be required to attend the University Recognition Group (URG) meeting. The URG Secretary will send you a meeting invite if this is needed.*

**Category 1**

LJMU programmes onto LJMU programmes where qualification is a listed entry method.

Other programmes where the entry qualification is listed on the spec.

Professional doctorate applications.

For PSRB students, please refer to category 7 first.

**Category 2**

Known qualifications where there are potential alternative pathways (e.g. transfer between universities).

Transfer from another UK university to an equivalent LJMU course.

For PSRB students, please refer to category 7 first.

**Category 3**

Previously considered international qualifications with UK-ENIC -confirmed equivalence and programme-level mapping if available, otherwise at module level.

**Category 4**

Not previously considered international qualifications with UK-ENIC-confirmed equivalence and programme-level mapping if available, otherwise at module level.

**Category 5**

Non-UK-ENIC confirmed equivalent programme, supporting evidence provided by a different party (such as a professional body).

**Category 6**

Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning.

For PSRB students, please refer to category 7 first.

**Category 7**

PSRB specific requirements (for example placement/hours of experience; placement/hours of experience and recognised awards; placement/hours of experience and experiential learning, etc). No amendment to fees required.

**Category 8**

Study abroad credit consideration

**APPENDIX 2**

**Mapping Templates for RPL/Credit Transfer**

**This document should be completed by an Admissions Tutor or Programme Leader.**

**Evidence can be mapped to level or module learning outcomes. Please add a table and rows where necessary.**

**Level Mapping**

Level and Credits

Evidence of how the applicant’s award meets LJMU Learning Outcomes

*Please provide full details of the applicant/student’s award, including awarding body, language of tuition, and any authoritative guidance from the UK’s National Agency for the Recognition and Comparison of International Qualification and Skills (NARIC). If module titles and/or Learning Outcomes are available, these should be specified.*

LJMU alternate exit award or module learning outcomes

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