University of Surrey

School of Health Sciences

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) & Recognition of Prior Credit (RPC)

[Formerly known as AP(E)L]

Student guide

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1. INTRODUCTION

The School of Health Sciences at the University of Surrey recognises that many students have a broad range of knowledge skills and experience to bring to their University Life. These may be from a range of contexts, such as professional, vocational and the community. If this applies to you, then the University offers you the opportunity, through a process called Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Recognition of Prior Credit (RPC), to enter your programme/ module at a stage appropriate to your previous learning and experience. This means that you may be exempted from certain elements of study in your programme and awarded credit based upon your previous qualifications/experience. Some programmes do have restrictions on RPL/ RPC, you are therefore you are advised to contact the appropriate Director of Studies or Pathway Leader. Restrictions normally apply where Professional Statutory or Regulatory bodies have accredited the course, for example, in Healthcare due to Professional and Regulatory Bodies requirements (such as the Nursing and Midwifery Council and The Health & Care Professions Council.)

In order to receive RPL/ RPC you will need to identify and have assessed as follows:
- your prior level of experience and achievement,
- its relevancy to the modules which you wish to seek exemption for
- the volume of learning

This ensures an academic judgment can be made about the level and volume of credit exempted. This demonstrates that all University of Surrey students receiving an award have achieved the programme/ module requirements, whether through studying the course and/ or using RPL/RPC, thereby demonstrating the fair treatment of all students.

2. WHAT IS RPL/ RPC?

RPL is a general term, widely used in universities (it was previously called Accreditation of Prior Learning [AP(E)L]). It relates to the formal recognition of learning gained in a variety of contexts before a student starts a University programme/ Module. There are four broad types of RPL.

1. Recognition of Prior *Experiential* Learning – recognition of prior informal learning achieved within the context of further learning and staff development. Essentially it is the learning gained through this experience that is assessed not the experience itself.
2. Recognition of Prior *Certificated* Learning (RPCL) – assessing and awarding credit for learning that has been previously accredited or certificated through a training provider but has not led to an award or qualification at a Higher Education [HE] level but have

not led to the award of HE credits as defined in the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Quality Code.

3. Recognition of Prior Credit (RPC) - recognition of prior formal learning in a Higher Education Institution [HEI] that led to the award of credits or Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) awards. This process may include Credit transfer whereby credits from an Associate Institution (University of Brighton, University of Greenwich, Canterbury and Christchurch University) may be recognised against one programme or module eg a student undertakes mentorship at the University of Brighton and wishes to complete their BSc/ MSc at the University of Surrey.

3 THE AIMS OF RPL

The aims or RPL are to:
  a) Enhance the student experience by reducing duplication of learning.
  b) Widen access and increase participation with University programmes;
  c) Enable flexibility of progression routes promoting lifelong learning;
  d) Recognise the value of prior learning for the purpose of awarding credit;

What to consider before applying for RPL/ RPC
RPL may not be right for everyone.
Advantages of RPL

- Finishing your programme earlier
- Have more time to focus on the rest of your modules
- Only need to attend sessions or submit assessments for those modules that you are exempt from

The *process* of applying for RPL can:
- Facilitate your understanding of how valuable your existing knowledge and experience are
- Develop, your skills in academic writing, referencing, critical thinking and reflection

Potential disadvantages of RPL
- If you work better with peer support you may not have as much time/contact with them so you may have to develop your own support networks
- Joining a programme part-way through means you will need to hit the ground running, with little opportunity for you to refresh your skills and knowledge or adjust to the demands of academic study.

- If you are new to studying this will be particularly challenging, especially if you join your programme part way through.

What you can do to help yourself

The University of Surrey Library has a study skills site where you can access a range of resources to help you evidencing your claim. Examples are presentation skills, literature searching, writing analytically- please access the following link

http://www.surrey.ac.uk/library/learning/index.htm

How much will it cost me to do RPL/ RPC?

For the initial consultation- there is no charge

For RPC claims based upon formal certified learning- there is no charge

For RPL claims solely based upon assessing prior learning- there is a charge of £100

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4. WHO WILL BE INVOLVED WITHIN THE SCHOOL OF HEALTH SCIENCES IN HELPING ME WITH MY CLAIM?

There are a number of people who will be involved in facilitating your claim

School RPL Lead- Dr Allison Wiseman a.c.wiseman@surrey.ac.uk

01483 689772

This person acts as the central point of access for all students wishing to claim RPL/RPC undertaking **Continuing Professional Development**.

RPL/ RPC advisor- This may be the Director of Study's or the Pathway Leader for the programme you are wishing to study. They will help you develop your claim identifying the evidence you need to provide and the timescales for this.

- For continuing professional development programmes please refer to details at

http://www.surrey.ac.uk/healthsciences/study/cpd/index.htm

- For **Professional Preparatory Programmes** you should contact the recruitment office at the University of Surrey) recruitment_@surrey.ac.uk

01483 686722

Or Admissions Tutor- Sarah Roberts sarah.roberts@surrey.ac.uk

01483 686695

RPL assessor- Will assess your claim ensuring that it meets the requirements for RPL / RPC in terms of:

Command of the Subject & Subject Specific Skills- in terms of the authenticity, relevancy, validity of your claim

Scholarly and Professional Skills and Attitudes- in terms of the sufficiency and verifiability of your claim (see University of Surrey, undergraduate and postgraduate descriptors)

RPL/RPC moderator- will verify the assessment of your claim in terms of the assessment criteria

RPL/RPC administrator- a member of administration staff who will communicate the final assessment decision to you, regarding your claim.

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5. WHAT CAN I CLAIM EXEMPTION FROM?

Before you can make any decision regarding making a claim you need to know what you will be expected to study on the programme so you can identify whether you have already achieved some of the requirements

http://www.surrey.ac.uk/healthsciences/study/cpd/index.htm

Therefore, you need to obtain a copy of the programme/ module specification, this will help you identify the names of the modules you need to study and their learning outcomes. These documents can be accessed through the Director of study's/ Pathway Leader. **Early discussion with either of these people is strongly recommended.** Having reviewed these documents, and spoken to the above you will have identified what module(s)/level(s) of study you may claim exemption against.

Within the University's General Regulations for undergraduate award bearing programmes (A1: Regulations for taught programmes,

The following minimum amount of credits must be achieved at the University of Surrey (including associated, accredited or /partner institutions) to achieve a University of Surrey award.

Award	FHEQ level	No. of credits	No. of credits to be studied at the University of Surrey
Certificate of Higher Education	4	120	45 credits level 4
Diploma of Higher Education	5	240	120 credits level 5
Foundation Degree	5	240	120 credits level 5
Bachelor's Degree (Ordinary)	5	300	60 credits level 6
Graduate Certificate	6	60	30 credits at level 6
Graduate Diploma	6	120	45 credits at level 6
Bachelor's degree (Honours), three years	6	360	90 credits at level 6
Integrated Master's degree (Honours)	7	480	120 credits at level 7

Postgraduate Certificate	7	60	30 credits at level 7
Postgraduate Diploma	7	120	60 credits at level 7
Master's degree	7	180	90 credits at level 7

6. **WHICH RPL/ RPC PROCESS SHOULD I FOLLOW?**

To help you make informed decisions, we strongly recommend that you approach the School of Health Sciences RPL/ RPC lead as soon as you can to discuss your possible RPL application.

You firstly need to decide what you are claiming against, the *admissions criteria* (Admission through RPL) and/or *academic credit* (i.e., modules or whole course level(s)) via RPEL/RPCL/Credit Transfer.

Secondly, what will you be using to claim exemption, i.e., will your claim be based on

1. your experience or a non-higher education qualification (RPL),
2. a higher education qualification (Credit Transfer) (RPC)
3. a combination of these?

There is nothing to prevent you from using a mixture of all three, if necessary, you just need to ensure your submission clearly shows what kind of prior learning will be used against which module(s)/level(s).

Once you have confirmed which process(es) to follow you need to think about how you will put your claim together.

7. **HOW DO I PUT MY CLAIM TOGETHER?**

In order to get any kind of RPL/RPC approved you need to evidence that you have already met the academic requirements of the admissions criteria/module(s)/level(s) and you do this through a formal submission. Once you have made your submission an academic judgment will be made as to whether your submission contains evidence that satisfies the criteria presented on page 5 and 6:

Currency of Learning

Claims for RPL/ RPC would normally be made with reference to certificated learning and learning derived from experience **which took place less than 5 years prior to the claim for RPL being made.** Where you wish to make a claim for RPL/ RPC which originally took place more than 5 years prior to the claim, you will need to provide additional evidence to demonstrate how you have maintained and developed your knowledge and skills.

If you are claiming exemption from academic credit, in deciding whether you have satisfied these criteria, the academic assessor will check that the evidence you provide matches the module or course level **learning outcomes** (these can be found in course handbooks and module guides or through the relevant DOS/ Pathway Leader). By doing this, the University can be assured that you have achieved the same learning requirements as students who have studied those module(s)/level(s).

It's a good idea to keep referring to the criteria as you are putting the submission together just to ensure it covers all the area required for approval as you go along.

What are learning outcomes?

Learning outcomes are statements specifying what learners will be able to do as a result of completing a module or course level.

How can I present my submission?

Your submission should fit with the kind of evidence you will be using and this can range in nature, and combinations, to accommodate all academic disciplines, student backgrounds and types of RPL/ RPC. Submission types can include:

a) Curriculum Vitae

b) Written narratives/reports

c) Personal statements

d) Certificates and transcripts

e) Multi-media sources

f) Witness testimonies

g) Interview/Viva Voce transcripts

h) Recordings of practical demonstrations

i) Webpages/websites

j) Curriculum documentation (eg. module and/or course learning outcomes from previous course provider

Questions to ask yourself when preparing your submission:

a) What did you learn from your previous experience/course/training?

b) What skills/learning can you demonstrate competency in following this activity?

c) What issues in this activity can you relate to the learning outcomes?

d) What did you do and why?

e) Why did something happen?

f) Could you have approached the activity differently?

What evidence (literature/ policies etc. supports this)

An application for RPL can be likened to that of a job application and requires a lot of thought and preparation. As a starting point you may wish to create mind-maps or bullet-points to help link elements of your learning to the required learning outcomes.

Your submission needs to be:

a) **Descriptive** – it clearly describes the context of the learning activities in terms of when, where, with whom, etc.

b) **Analytical** - you systematically evaluate the evidence you have provided including what you does well and what you did poorly.

c) **Detailed** – regarding what you have learnt and how you have used that learning.

d) **Evidence-based** – you must include evidence of the learning you refer to, such as certificates, transcripts, reports, documentation from training courses, publications, multi-media sources, etc.

All claims for RPL must be made in such a way as to allow those considering the claim to understand the details of the claim made. Claims must be submitted in electronic format on the date specified by your RPL advisor. Hard copies will not be considered

8. **WHAT HAPPENS ONCE I HAVE FINISHED MY SUBMISSION?**

Your submission will be assessed by the RPL/RPC assessor, in conjunction with the RPL/ RPC moderator, if required, who will make a recommendation to the School RPL/ RPC Board. The Board will decide on whether your claim can be accepted. You will be notified of the outcome by School of Health Sciences RPL/ RPC administrator within 30 days of your submission. You may be asked to provide further or clearer evidence within your submission for the application to proceed. If amendments to the application are required you will be contacted.

If, during the process of considering the claim for RPL, the academic judgment is that the application is to be rejected, the process will conclude at that point and you will be provided with feedback regarding the grounds for the rejection.

How long does it take to process my application?

It takes 3 weeks from date of submission for a decision to be made. Please be assured that your claim will be processed, and the outcome relayed to you, as quickly as possible. Submitting a comprehensive and clear application will help the process run smoothly and quickly. Please see the School of Health Sciences website for Submission dates for RPL/RPC claims.