

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) – an overview

What is RPL?

Purpose

RPL facilitates the credit accumulation and transfer scheme which operates across UK higher education, allowing students to enter a programme with advanced standing because of academic credit previously awarded or experience gained. Applicants may be exempted from studying a particular module(s), or be allowed to enter into a higher level of the programme. It is a process based on academic judgement.

Definitions

Prior learning for which credit has been awarded: a student has undertaken prior learning which led to the award of credit or a qualification by a UK higher education degree awarding body.

Prior certificated learning: a student has not been awarded credit but has studied a work-based or professional development programme equivalent to higher education level.

Prior experiential learning: a student has gained experiential learning which is at the appropriate level to be recognised via the award of RPL credits.

Principles of RPL

Applications

- RPL claims should be made prior to the start of the relevant learning in the programme
- Applicants may not normally re-use credit from a previous completed programme towards an equivalent or lower award
- Assessment is made against the RPL criteria and the module learning outcomes
Consideration should be given to the 'shelf-life' of the learning being considered
- Decisions taken should be transparent and equitable

The award of RPL

- RPL may only be awarded in accordance with the university regulations
- No marks are awarded for credit achieved via the RPL process, unless the RPL is awarded for credits previously earned at DMU
- Award classification is based only on modules studied at DMU
- Credits awarded via the RPL process must be clearly displayed on documentation provided to students on graduation, for example the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR)

RPL process

Enquiry

An applicant/student enquires about RPL and is provided with advice and the application form. Faculties may use this, tailored to their needs, or develop their own proforma as long as it covers the information in the generic form.

Application

The applicant/student submits the application form with appropriate evidence and a portfolio, if appropriate. In some faculties/subject areas a meeting with the applicant/student may be required to explore their claim.

Decision

The claim is considered by the appropriate staff – Admissions staff for applicants and the relevant programme leader/team if the student is already studying a DMU programme. Authority to make decisions on RPL will not normally be devolved to partner institutions.

Record keeping

The decision and the reason for it should be clearly recorded on the application form. If the application involves accepting credit earned at another institution, the name of the institution and the level, volume and date of the credit achieved must be recorded.

Criteria

Validity

The achievement must be comparable with the standard and content of the programme the claim relates to. The evidence should match the learning claimed, and the learning should be appropriate to the module(s) learning outcomes.

Sufficiency

There should be evidence to cover the outcomes for the learning against which the claim is being made: 80%+ match between the student's prior learning and the module(s) outcomes.

Currency

The assessment should establish that the learning, whenever undertaken, is still current. In some subjects currency may be an issue. Programme RPL regulations may specify that learning acquired more than five years ago may need supporting by a portfolio of more recent achievements.

Authenticity

The admissions tutor/programme leader must be assured that the claim relates to the applicant's own work, for example experiential learning should be endorsed by direct evidence, including referees.

Regulations

Undergraduate and taught postgraduate regulations

There are regulations governing the award of RPL which can be found in the *Taught Programmes Academic Regulations*.

RPL credit limits

Only a certain proportion of RPL credits can be awarded. Students are expected to complete a significant part of their studies at DMU to gain a DMU award. For example:

Honours degree: Students must study 120 level 6 credits at DMU

Master's degree: Students must study 90 level 7 credits at DMU

These limits don't apply to ex-DMU students re-entering their original programme of study.

The re-use of credit

Relevant credit achieved can be re-used towards a higher award, subject to the RPL limits. It is important that the re-use of credit is accepted in relation to staged or complementary awards, for example where credits achieved from a foundation degree can count towards the achievement of an honours degree.

How is RPL recorded?

Student record system

The credits awarded via RPL will be recorded on the student record system, against the level to which it applies, or against the individual module(s).

Assessment boards

The credits awarded via RPL will be shown on the assessment board reports so board members can see how a student's profile has been formed and that a student has sufficient credits to progress or be given an award.

Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR)

Students achieving a DMU award will receive a Higher Education Achievement Report. The HEAR will include details of the credits undertaken by the student, clearly identifying where and when RPL credits were awarded.

Useful resources

Publication	Web link
Sally Lloyd, Senior Officer, Taught Programmes	sllloyd@dmu.ac.uk x7303
Guide to the recognition of prior learning	www.dmu.ac.uk/scheme-regulations
Taught Programmes Academic Regulations	www.dmu.ac.uk/academic-regulations