

# **Student Guide to Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**

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## What is RPL?

If you are thinking of starting a degree at Calderdale College then you may be able to gain admission to your degree if you do not meet the standard entry requirements, or exemptions through studying part of your degree, through the use of RPL.

Recognition of prior learning or RPL is the term given to learning that may have taken place at an earlier point such as through your workplace, on short courses, in your community or through voluntary organisations.

You cannot request RPL for the learning itself (such as 100 hours voluntary work), but you can request RPL from the outcomes of the learning.

There are two main types of RPL

1. [Recognition of prior certificated learning \(RPCL\)](#)
2. [Recognition of prior experiential learning \(RPEL\)](#)

You can pursue an RPCL application, RPEL application, or a mixture of the two. It is your responsibility (with the support of a member of Calderdale College staff) to demonstrate how your prior learning will allow you to enter onto a degree programme, enter at a higher level of a degree programme or obtain exemptions from specific modules.

All degree programmes, including those at Calderdale College, are categorised by levels on what is known as the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) in England and Wales and Northern Ireland. Programmes are made up of a specific amount of credit. Typically:

Level	For example	Credit
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• HNC</li><li>• Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE)</li><li>• First year of Foundation Degree, HND or Honours Degree</li></ul>	120
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• HND</li><li>• Foundation Degree</li><li>• Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE)</li><li>• Second year of Honours Degree</li></ul>	240
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Honours Degree</li></ul>	360

Within each level, the total credits are divided into modules (or units on Higher National programmes). Students registered on Open University programmes will study 15 or 20 credit (or multiples) modules, for example, on the first year of a degree programme, six 20 credit modules are studied.

## What is Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL)?

Prior certificated learning (RPCL) is learning which you received certification for. This may or may not be on relevant HE frameworks such as the FHEQ. If your previous certificated learning is not at degree level (i.e. level 4 or above) then the Register of Regulated Qualifications is available through [Ofqual](#).

Examples can include:

- If you apply for HND Business with a Level 4 Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) certificate
- If you apply for HNC Business with NVQ Level 6 Business and Management
- If you withdrew from a BA (Hons) Performing Arts programme and accepted a Certificate of Higher Education and decide to recommence the BA (Hons) Performing

Arts programme at Level 5 two years later. This type of RPCL is known as *advanced standing*.

## What is the difference between advanced standing and entering onto a Top Up degree?

Advanced standing is usually granted if you come onto a degree programme at a higher level (i.e. Level 5 or Level 6). If you are entering onto a Top Up degree you will probably not need to apply for RPL as this type of progression is known as an automatic progression. Examples\* of automatic progression could include:

- Completing a HND Business and progressing into Level 6 of a BA (Hons) Business Administration course
- Completing an Art and Design Foundation Degree and progressing into Level 6 of a BA (Hons) Art and Design

*\*All other entry criteria must also be met*

## Can I apply for an exemption so that I don't have to take some modules?

If you can demonstrate that your prior certificated learning meets the learning outcomes of one or more of the prospective programme modules, you can apply for recognition (or a credit exemption).

For example:

- If you previously withdrew from a BA (Hons) Health and Social Care in your final year and now wish to enrol onto a BA (Hons) Managing Health and Social Care Settings programme your previous certification could allow you to enter at Level 5 (Advanced Standing) and receive exemption from a 20 credit Level 5 module 'The Political Landscape of Social Care'.
- If you studied 15 months of a BA (Hons) Philosophy programme and wish to enrol on a BSc (Hons) Metallurgy programme you would not be able to apply for RPL as there is no parity between the programmes.

If you have studied professional qualifications such as those from the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) and Chartered Management Institute (CMI) you can automatically receive exemptions from studying some modules/units on named business programmes. For more information please visit the [HEART](#) website.

## How do I apply for RPCL?

If you want to enter a degree programme with advanced standing you would normally indicate your desired year of entry on your UCAS form and submit a portfolio (as detailed below) to be considered alongside your UCAS application. This would be looked at by your Programme Leader, who is identified at the point of admission.

Your portfolio should include:

- i. Recognition of Prior Learning Application Form (available from the Programme Leader)
- ii. Documentation from your previous certificated learning including:
  - Certificate
  - Transcript
  - Programme specification
  - Module specification
  - Any other relevant syllabi information

If you are missing any of this information you can contact the organisation who awarded your certificate. Please note there may be fees for duplicate documentation.

- iii. Details of which module/elements of the programme for which you are seeking exemption, including an overview of how you have met these learning outcomes through your prior certificated learning.

The programme leader will confirm whether your previous learning maps to your programme and that your prior learning demonstrates the required minimum pass mark for the module/level.

## What is Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)?

Prior experiential learning is an encompassing term that covers your learning achieved outside of formal qualifications. It can occur in many places, but the key environments include the workplace, in voluntary roles or in community settings. The use of RPEL is common in programmes such as Foundation Degrees and Masters.

For example:

- If you have undertaken successful marketing and communications activities for a charity for a number of years, you may gain credit exemption from studying Level 4 marketing modules on a BA (Hons) Business and Marketing programme
- If you are a volunteer sports coach for local youth organisations then you may receive exemption from some modules on a HNC Sports Coaching programme
- If you are a self-taught artist who exhibits and sells portraits you may apply for credit exemption from some modules on a BA (Hons) Art and Design programme.

Like the recognition of prior certificate learning, you can apply for RPEL to enter with advanced standing or gain credit exemptions.

## How do I apply for RPEL?

If you wish to enter a programme with advanced standing you should normally indicate your desired year of entry on your UCAS form, and then submit a portfolio as detailed below which is considered alongside the UCAS application. This would be looked at by your Programme Leader, who is identified at the point of admission.

Your portfolio should typically include:

- i. Recognition of Prior Learning Application Form (available from the Programme Leader)
- ii. Table of contents
- iii. Detailed CV or personal profile including:
  - a. employment history
  - b. education and training history
  - c. professional qualifications
- iv. Introduction to career goals and context of the application
- v. Experience, which will build on the CV
- vi. What learning has taken place and reflection on what you learned from this experience
- vii. Details and evidence of achievement, showing what behaviour or performance changes have arisen and been demonstrated from the learning
- viii. Relevancy of this learning/achievement to the programme applied for
- ix. Currency of the learning i.e. has it occurred within the last ten years
- x. Proof of the learning i.e. evidence that you have undertaken the learning
- xi. Details of which module/elements of the programme for which you are seeking exemption, including an overview of how you have met these learning outcomes through your prior learning.

It is your programme leader's responsibility to confirm that your previous learning outcomes map to the programme and demonstrates the required minimum pass mark (i.e. 40) for the

module/level. The programme leader will also ensure that recognition of your prior experiential learning will not disadvantage you in later studies i.e. that you have not missed core knowledge or practical skills.

### **Are there limits for RPL claims?**

There are limits as to how much credit you can be awarded. As a general rule this is no more than 50% of a programme's credit i.e. 120 credits of a Foundation Degree. No credit can be requested at Level 6 (i.e. a Top Up Degree or final year of an Honours Degree).

If you are awarded credit against modules or levels, these do not receive marks and cannot be used in your degree classification, and no credit can be awarded for the dissertation/major project element of any programme.

The programme leader will also assess your RPL application to ensure that your credit is not 'double counted', which generally means it has been used towards a degree award elsewhere

### **I have submitted my application, what happens next?**

Once your application has been considered, it is the programme leader's responsibility to notify you whether or not your claim was successful. Information from your claim will be passed to Data Services for inputting, and the Board of Examiners, which decided your progression and award will also be notified. RPL will be identified on your transcript of study that you will receive annually.

If your evidence is deemed insufficient you can re-submit your portfolio and seek extra guidance from the programme leader.

### **Do I have to pay to apply for RPL?**

You will receive a pro-rata fee reduction (i.e. one 20 credit module will equate to a reduction by 1/6<sup>th</sup> of the annual full time programme fee) for the modules/levels that a successful RPL claim is made for.

There is no charge made for RPCL claims for admission to the programme or module exemptions.

For successful RPEL claims, you will be required to pay 10% of the module fee(s) that are applied for to cover the extensive administrative costs. If an RPEL claim is unsuccessful, an administrative charge of £50 per 20 credit module must still be paid.