

Recognition of Prior Learning From July 2025

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1. Policy Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this policy is to detail how RPL can be applied. This includes eligibility, process and outcomes Example

2. Scope

2.1. What does this policy cover?

2.1.1. This policy applies to all undergraduate and postgraduate applicants for Recognition of Prior Learning

2.2. What does this policy not cover?

2.2.1. This policy does not cover any credit studied at OCA if students is still on programme.

3. General Principles

3.1. OCA's guiding principles for RPL is to use a defined transparent formula process to ensure fairness and consistency, assuring currency of the learning and assuring proper coverage of the learning outcomes.

4. Summary of the scheme

4.1. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the identification, assessment and formal acknowledgement of prior learning and achievement which is considered when a student registers or enrolls in an Open College of the Arts (OCA) delivered qualification. There are two types of RPL which may lead to the award of credit towards qualifications offered by OCA: Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL) and Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL).

4.2. To be eligible for Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL), your prior learning must have been formally assessed and certificated and approved as eligible for Open University credit. The level and content of the study must be appropriate for the qualification concerned and all applications are subject to academic judgement. The outcome of an application will confirm the number of credits awarded, the form of exemption approved and the units (modules) or stage within the qualification to which the credit may be applied. An award of RPCL credit may also be referred to as 'Credit Transfer'

4.3. You may also be eligible for Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) which is experiential or work-based learning, which is either non-certificated or is awarded by a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB), but not simultaneously awarded by another recognised Higher Education Institution to be recognised.

4.4. The maximum amount of RPL that can be awarded is two-thirds for the full BA Hons degree (360 credits) and for full Masters degrees (a minimum of 180 credits) and not sub-awards such as CertHE/DipHE

where the maximum is 50%. Students transferring from a previous Awarding Institution of OCA should refer to the specific Transition Policy in place for their transfer of study.

5. Forms of RPL credit

5.1. RPL credit will be awarded in the form of either:

- Module exemption, exempting you from studying specified units(s) /module(s) where the learning outcomes, level and amount of your previous study or experience match or exceed those of the relevant OCA unit(s) / module(s)
- General credit exemption, exempting you from studying a specified amount of credit at a particular level or stage of a qualification where the learning outcomes of your previous study or experience broadly align with the learning outcomes in the relevant level or stage of the OCA qualification. The level and amount of your previous study or experience must match or exceed the amount of general credit awarded to you.

6. Age of RPL credit awarded

6.1. You will only be awarded RPL credit if your prior study or experience has been completed within a timescale of a maximum of 5 years prior to the start of study on your registered qualification

7. Time limit for completing qualifications which include RPL credit

7.1. Stage and degree timeframes are outlined in the Student Regulations. These will be pro-rata'd to account for awarded RPL credit

8. RPL Restrictions

8.1. A student admitted on the basis of uncertificated learning and experience or through prior certified learning is subject to the same principles of admission as all other students on that programme

8.2. OCA will be satisfied that an individual applicant has fulfilled some of the progression and assessment requirements of the programme by means other than attendance on the planned programme and will be able by completing the remaining requirements to fulfil the learning outcomes of the programme and attain the standard required for the award, that student may be admitted to an appropriate point in the programme

- 8.3.** Any award of RPL credit will be made towards a specific OCA qualification and you must commence study on the qualification in the within 6 months of the outcome of the RPL application for a non-cohorted qualification and for the next available intake for a cohorted qualification.
- 8.4.** If you apply for an award of RPL credit, you must follow the application guidance and regulations that are in force at the time of the application. If you ask us to reassess a previous award, you will follow the regulations in force at the time that you ask for the reassessment
- 8.5.** RPL claims for any synoptic assessments e.g. independent research projects will not be accepted.
- 8.6.** OCA will only award RPL general credit exemption if there is a significant overlap between your RPL application and the learning outcomes of the units(modules) for which you are claiming exemption
- 8.7.** 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/unit, where students are expected to complete 120 credits in order to gain the award.
- 8.8.** Recognition for prior learning (certified, experiential or uncertified) is not permitted for the thesis/dissertation module/unit on a PG programme
- 8.9.** Prior learning that is at a higher stage can be recognised towards lower-level credit exemption within OCA if it meets the learning outcomes of the units (modules) exemption is being sought against.
- 8.10.** The minimum RPL claim that will be considered by OCA is for 40 Stage 1 (HE4) credits
- 8.11.** No RPL application can be accepted for credits awarded from a non-UK institution without an accompanying comparability report from [UK ENIC](#) (the UK National Information Centre)
- 8.12.** RPL credit will clearly be identified as this - and the stage awarded - on OCA provided transcripts to students

- 8.13. When calculating final classification, performance in work for which an award of credit for RPL has been made is not taken into account in the calculation of the final award.

9. Applying for an award of RPL credit

- 9.1. To apply for an award of RPCL credit or RPEL credit, please review the guidance notes for both RPCL and RPEL that are available on OCA public facing website www.oca.ac.uk <https://www.oca.ac.uk/credit-exemptions/>

- 9.2. If you are applying for an award of either form of RPL credit to count towards an undergraduate qualification, you must submit an application before you start for the qualification. If you are applying for an award of RPL credit to count towards a postgraduate qualification, you may apply at any time before the qualification is awarded.

- 9.3. The application forms for both RPCL and RPEL are on the online section of OCA website for credit exemptions. Once the forms have been received by OCA Registry department they will be reviewed and then applicants will be contacted by email to supply supporting evidence.

10. Applying to have more than one period of previous study or experience assessed

- 10.1. You may provide evidence of more than one period of study or experience to support an application for an award of RPL credit. There must be no significant overlap in content between the periods of study or experience

11. RPL fee

- 11.1. If, at the time of your application, there is an RPL fee payable, you must pay the fee to have your application considered. If you do not pay the fee where it applies, we will not consider your application. Fee details will be made clear in the RPL Guidance Notes

12. Timeframes of Application

- 12.1. All current timeframes to receive an outcome of an RPL application are detailed within the available Guidance Notes

13. Appealing the Decision

- 13.1. If an applicant is unhappy with the decision of the application, then they have the remit to make a formal academic appeal for the admission

decision that has been made. Applicants for RPL cannot appeal the admission decision on the basis of academic judgement but can appeal if they believe there was a procedural irregularity in the application and decision making process. More information on academic appeals is available in [OCA's Academic Appeal Policy & Procedure](#)

14. Monitoring and Evaluation of the Process

- 14.1.** The application process and Guidance Notes will be reviewed annually by OCA Quality Team
- 14.2.** Following this review an annual report will be submitted to OCA's Curriculum & Quality Committee (CQC) which covers the number of applications for RPCL and number of applications for RPEL (both successful and unsuccessful), recommendations for changes to application documentation in response to applicant feedback and/or any recommendations to the process
- 14.3.** The policy will be reviewed annually in line with OCA's Policy Review Schedule

15. Implementing the policy

- 15.1.1.** This policy will be applied through the application process as outlined. OCA's Curriculum & Quality Committee (CQC) have oversight of implementation of RPL

16. Glossary of terms

****Academic Appeal**:** A formal request made by a student to reconsider a decision related to their academic progress or status.

****Academic Judgement**:** The decision made by academic staff based on their expertise in the subject matter, often regarding the suitability of prior learning for credit transfer.

****Assessment**:** The process of evaluating a student's prior learning and achievements to determine eligibility for RPL credit.

****Credit Transfer**:** The process of recognizing and transferring credits from one institution to another, applicable under RPCL.

****Credits****: Units used to measure educational achievement, where a certain number is required to complete a degree.

****Degree Timeframes****: The periods within which students must complete their qualifications, adjusted pro-rata for awarded RPL credits.

****Experiential Learning****: Knowledge and skills gained through work, life experiences, or informal education, recognised under RPEL.

****General Credit Exemption****: RPL credit awarded when previous learning broadly aligns with the learning outcomes of a qualification level or stage, without specifying exact units or modules.

****Learning Outcomes****: The specific skills, knowledge, and abilities that students are expected to achieve by the end of a course or program.

****Module Exemption****: RPL credit awarded for specific units or modules based on prior learning that matches or exceeds the required learning outcomes.

****Procedural Irregularity**** The documented steps or fair procedures for handling an application or making a decision were not properly adhered to.

****Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL)****: Recognition of learning that has been formally assessed and certified by an educational institution or professional body.

****Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)****: Recognition of learning gained through work experience or other non-formal education, not necessarily certified by an educational institution.

****Professional, Statutory, or Regulatory Body (PSRB)****: Organizations that provide certification and accreditation for professionals within specific industries.

****RPL Credit****: Credits awarded through the recognition of prior learning, which can count towards the completion of a qualification.

****Student Regulations****: The rules and guidelines that govern student behavior, assessment, and progression within an institution.

****UK ENIC (UK National Information Centre)****: The national agency responsible for providing information and advice on the comparability of international qualifications

17. If you need support

- 17.1.** If a student requires this policy in an alternative format or requires assistance in understanding the policy please contact the OCA Learner Support Team at learnersupport@oca.ac.uk or 01226 978618 to discuss at the earliest opportunity.
- 17.2.** Guidance for making an RPCL or RPEL application is available on OCA's website on the [Credit Exemptions](#) page.

18. Linked and other policies and legislation

- 18.1.** This policy references [OCA's Academic Appeal Policy](#) and OCA's Policy Review Schedule.

19. Changes since previous policy

- 19.1.** This version of the policy clarifies the enrolments timeframes following RPL outcome for cohorted and non-cohorted qualifications
- 19.2.** This version of the policy outlines provides more detail when an RPL decision can be appealed.
- 19.3.** The glossary has been updated with the definition of procedural irregularity
- 19.4.** Links have been added to the additional online guidance.

20. Policies superseded by this document

- 20.1.** This policy supersedes any previous credit transfer information provided in any medium previously known as APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning) and any previous versions of this policy

