

6.4 Recognition of Prior Learning Policy for DipHE & BSc (Hons) Long-Term Conditions (For programmes validated by The Open University)

Please note: information relating to RPL into a programme accredited by The University of Hertfordshire (UH) can be found on the UH website (<http://www.herts.ac.uk>).

1. Introduction

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) offers an important means by which Education for Health can promote the recognition and accreditation of the knowledge and skills students have acquired outside of their studies with the organisation. This is achieved through the RPL policy as outlined in this document.

The RPL policy supports and promotes recruitment and retention through:

- awarding academic value to a diversity of learning experiences;
- avoiding repetition of learning previously acquired;
- contributing to curricula flexibility for the student;
- accelerating the student's rate of progress where appropriate.

2. Definitions of RPL

RPL is a process that recognises learning for the purposes of claiming credit against an award regardless of where or how the learning was achieved. It has two components, RPCL and RPEL, that are defined below.

2.1 RPCL denotes the Recognition of Prior *Certificated* Learning which is learning that has been previously assessed e.g. learning arising from academic and professional awards

2.2 RPEL denotes the Recognition of Prior *Experiential* Learning i.e. learning derived from experience which is uncertificated (not previously assessed) e.g. un/paid work, community activities, leisure pursuits and other informal learning experiences.

The important distinction is that with RPCL credit the student has certificated evidence of assessed learning. Education for Health has to establish the status and legitimacy of the awarding body and claim for credit but will not be involved in further assessment of the learning.

An RPEL student by contrast has to demonstrate to Education for Health via submission of a portfolio of evidence of learning, which is evaluated by the Academic Review Panel.

Credit (certificated or experiential) accumulated towards an award must be assessed through an RPL process as part of the admissions process.

3. Award of Credit

RPL applicants may be awarded:

3.1 Specific Credit: Credit that is awarded against a specific module as part of their programme;

3.2 Direct entry: This is permitted against a specific stage of an award where a student has completed certificated qualifications equivalent to a stage of study (either 120 credits at FHEQ Level 4 or 5)

4. Principles underpinning RPL within Education for Health

The principles governing the RPL process are listed below:

- 4.1. RPL processes should be embedded across the curriculum. All students registering for a qualification award must be offered the opportunity to demonstrate learning through an RPL process.
- 4.2. RPL is also embedded in Education for Health regulations for progression and assessment.
- 4.3. An application for RPL credit must be made at the point of admission.
- 4.4. Awarding RPL credit is a holistic process. Where significant credit is given, e.g. for a stage of an award (i.e. direct entry), the prior learning equivalence will be judged on the basis of credit level descriptors and relevance of subject content and skills, as appropriate, rather than detailed mapping to individual module learning outcomes.
- 4.5. Likewise, where credit is awarded against named modules the learning must meet the learning outcomes of such modules so as to satisfy the overall module aims and outcomes. Where credit is matched against specific modules, it is recorded as RPL credit for the named module.
- 4.6. Where the prior learning does not match existing named module learning outcomes, credit may be awarded as long as learning is assessable in content/skills and level, and that an appropriate programme of study can be designed for the student to meet the overall aims and objectives of the award. Where this credit is relevant to the subject(s) of the award, the level and volume of credit is recorded as RPL pathway credit.
- 4.7. Credit awarded through an RPL process must be clearly identifiable on the student transcript as a RPL module, pathway or general credit for programme planning and award purposes.

- 4.8. The minimum amount of RPL credit that can be awarded is equivalent to one module.
- 4.9. The maximum amount of RPL credit that can be awarded is 240 credits for a BSc (Hons) programme and 120 credits for a DipHE programme. It is not permitted to transfer credit against level 6 provision within the BSc (Hons) programme.
- 4.10. Appropriate RPL documentation should be provided for students, academic and administrative staff and external assessors.
- 4.11. Within this documentation responsibility for all stages of the RPL process from initial enquiry to the award of credit should be clearly defined. The responsibilities of students should also be made explicit in the RPL process.
- 4.12. Staff development will be provided for all those involved in the RPL process.
- 4.13. The student claiming RPL will receive an appropriate and timely decision.
- 4.14. The decision making process should be transparent.

5. Equating Prior Learning to Education for Health Courses

- 5.1 Specific Credit: In order to be credited towards an Education for Health programme award, previous learning must normally be at the same level of study. Learning from a higher level can be counted down.
- 5.2 The minimum amount of credit that can be awarded is equivalent to one module.
- 5.3 Students undertaking a BSc (Hons) programme can claim up to 240 credits. This is usually up to 120 credits at level 4 and 120 credits at level 5, however if a student has relevant credit at level 6 this can be counted down. Students will still need to study 120 credits at level 6 to complete their programme.
- 5.4 Award classifications will be calculated using the level 6 credits studied as part of the programme. RPCL credit does not contribute to the award classification.
- 5.5 RPL against compulsory modules is not permitted.
- 5.6 Students undertaking a DipHE programme can claim up to 120 credits. This is up to 120 credits at level 4, however if a student has relevant credit at level 5 or 6 this can be counted down. Students will need to study 120 credits at level 5 or 6 to complete their programme.

6. Level 4 Credits

Education for Health does not have provision at Level 4 against which prior certificated learning can be matched. Credit is therefore awarded by virtue of the applicant demonstrating that they have

met the assumed level 4 learning outcomes which are shared by the DipHE Long-Term Conditions and BSc(Hons) Long-Term Conditions (all pathways).

6.1 Assumed Level 4 learning outcomes:

Practical and Professional skills:

- Demonstrate currency of knowledge sufficient to hold a current entry onto a UK health professional register (NMC, HCPC or GMC) or demonstrate evidence of certificated learning equivalent to 120 credits in a relevant healthcare discipline providing evidence of meeting all level 4 learning outcomes.
- Act in accordance with the legal, ethical and policy boundaries of your healthcare practice.

Knowledge and Understanding:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the key biological, physical and psychological concepts relating to the field of the management of long-term conditions.

Cognitive Skills:

- Evaluate and interpret information required to care for a range of service users.
- Use appropriate knowledge and evidence to assist in decision making.

Key Skills:

- Communicate ideas, arguments and theories effectively both verbally and in writing, using appropriate ICT tools.
- These learning outcomes are aligned with the FHEQ level descriptors appropriate for Level 4 qualification awards.

7. Direct Entry

7.1 Direct entry onto stage 2 of an award (credit awarded equivalent to 120 credits at level 4)

Students who have a health professional qualification ***and*** hold current entry onto the register of a UK Health Professional Body (NMC, HCPC, GMC) are permitted direct entry onto stage 2 of the qualification award.

Holding a current entry onto the relevant register ensures currency of knowledge and skills and of an ongoing profile of learning in the context of professional development. The professional standards of the following regulatory bodies have been mapped against the assumed level 4 learning outcomes (section 6.1) to ensure students being granted direct entry onto stage 2 have met the required level

4 learning outcomes. The links provided give access to the relevant professional standards documentation:

Nurses:

NMC – Standards for competence for registered nurses:

http://www.gmc-uk.org/static/documents/content/Good_medical_practice_-_English_0914.pdf

Allied Healthcare Professionals:

HCPC – Standards of conduct, performance and ethics:

<http://www.hcpcuk.org.uk/assets/documents/10003B6EStandardsofconduct,performanceandethics.pdf>

Doctors:

GMC – Good medical practice:

http://www.gmc-uk.org/static/documents/content/Good_medical_practice_-_English_0914.pdf

Pharmacists:

Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education (CPPE) / HEE – Consultation skills for pharmacy practice: practice standards for England:

<http://www.consultationskillsforpharmacy.com/docs/docc.pdf>

Students who do not have a health professional qualification or do not hold current entry onto the register of a UK Health Professional Body (NMC, HCPC, GMC) are permitted direct entry onto stage 2 of the qualification award if they are able to demonstrate evidence of certificated learning equivalent to 120 credits at level 4 in a relevant healthcare field and demonstrate how this enables them to meet the level 4 learning outcomes in 6.1. Students are also able to apply to have their experiential learning assessed which is outlined in section 9.2.

7.2 Direct entry onto stage 3 of an award (credit awarded equivalent to 120 credits at level 4 and 120 credits at level 5)

Students who have a health professional qualification **and** hold current entry onto the register of a UK Health Professional Body (NMC, HCPC, GMC) are permitted direct entry onto stage 3 of the qualification award if their health professional qualification is at level 5 or above on the FHEQ. This includes DipHE, Foundation degree or BSc qualification awards.

Holding a current entry onto the relevant register ensures currency of knowledge and skills. The professional standards of the following regulatory bodies have been mapped against the assumed level 4 learning outcomes above, which when combined with the certificated learning from the health professional qualification ensures students being granted direct entry onto stage 3 have met the required learning outcomes. The link provided gives access to the relevant professional standards documentation:

Nurses:

NMC – Standards for competence for registered nurses:

http://www.gmc-uk.org/static/documents/content/Good_medical_practice_-_English_0914.pdf

Allied Healthcare Professionals:

HCPC – Standards of conduct, performance and ethics:

<http://www.hcpcuk.org.uk/assets/documents/10003B6EStandardsofconduct,performanceandethics.pdf>

Doctors:

GMC – Good medical practice:

http://www.gmc-uk.org/static/documents/content/Good_medical_practice_-_English_0914.pdf

Pharmacists:

Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education (CPPE) / HEE – Consultation skills for pharmacy practice: practice standards for England:

<http://www.consultationskillsforpharmacy.com/docs/docc.pdf>

In addition:

7.3 Where applicants have a health professional qualification from outside the UK, the student will be responsible for obtaining a statement of comparability from NARIC (<http://www.naric.org.uk/naric/>). This must be submitted with the application.

7.4 If a student can provide evidence from a UK professional body (e.g. NMC, HCPC, GMC) that their qualification was deemed by that professional body to be equivalent to that of a UK qualification, and that it enabled direct entry onto the relevant register (without the need for a conversion course or equivalent) this can be considered in place of a statement of comparability via NARIC.

7.5 To ensure currency of the programme award applications for specific credit will only be considered if the credit was achieved no more than 5 years prior to registration onto the Education for Health (OU validated) award.

7.6 Outside the timeframe outlined in 7.5, an applicant must also submit a short portfolio, demonstrating how they have remained up to date in the relevant clinical area, and continue to meet the current module learning outcomes. If the application is accepted specific credit will be awarded against the relevant module, however no mark will be recorded on the student's transcript.

7.7 There is no time limit in relation to the qualifications accepted for direct entry onto the qualification award where the applicant holds a current entry onto a professional register. Where the applicant is not currently entered onto the relevant professional register, credit must have been obtained no more than 5 years prior to the date of application, and currency of knowledge must be demonstrated as part of the application process.

8. Roles and Responsibilities**8.1 The Applicant**

The Applicant is responsible for the preparation and submission of their application for the award of RPL credit, specifically:

- contacting the programme administrator to discuss their application and to obtain the required documentation.
- reflecting on their experiences and identifying the skills and knowledge already achieved and their future learning needs.
- comparing the prior learning with the learning outcomes of the module/level/programme for which they are applying for RPL credit.
- gathering together appropriate evidence in support of their claim for RPL credit. This may include a statement of comparability from NARIC.
- submitting the evidence to the Programme Administrator in an agreed format within an agreed deadline.

8.2 The Programme Administrator

The programme administrator is responsible for providing the applicant with the guidance and documentation necessary to allow the applicant to progress their claim for RPL, if it is deemed appropriate to do so, specifically:

- describing and explaining RPL and the processes involved.
- explaining the requirements of the programme of study with respect to the specific learning outcomes for modules/levels and the credits associated with each.
- advising on the type of evidence which should be gathered, its collation, and preparation in an appropriate format. If the claim relates to RPCL, the format of the evidence is likely to be certificates of qualifications or awards resulting from the prior learning. If the claim relates to RPEL, there may be a number of different types of evidence available/required, which may include the preparation of a portfolio of evidence.
- accepting a completed claim and progressing it through the RPL procedures.
- informing the applicant of the decision following the assessment of the claim.
- producing and/or maintaining appropriate records of the RPL process including:
 - notes of meetings and other contacts with/about the applicant;
 - the report of the assessment process;
 - documented feedback from the student on the RPL process.

8.3 The Academic Review Panel

The Academic Review Panel is responsible for assessing the RPL claim, specifically:

- considering the learning outcomes for the module/level, identifying appropriate assessment criteria to be met by the applicant's claim for RPL and communicating these to the applicant and the programme administrator.
- assessing the evidence presented by the applicant against the defined assessment criteria.
- maintaining appropriate records of the RPL process including notes of meetings and other contacts with/about the applicant.

9. Application Procedures

9.1 RPCL Application Procedures

Further guidance for students on the RPCL application process is available on our website in section 6.5:

<https://www.educationforhealth.org/education/student-support/regulations-policies/>

9.2 RPEL Application Procedures

RPEL assessment is predominantly an individual assessment process that takes account of the specific experiential learning context and to facilitate this appropriate flexibility has been built into the relevant regulatory principles. This is to enable formal recognition of a diversity of learning through experience and to facilitate individual assessment in a way that is appropriate to the assessment of experiential learning.

Further guidance for students on the RPEL application process is available on our website in section 6.6:

<https://www.educationforhealth.org/education/student-support/regulations-policies/>

9.3 Assessment of RPEL Applications

RPEL is assessed by portfolio in which you collate evidence of learning and supply a narrative relating this.

The marking process for RPEL submissions, as for other forms of assessment promotes consistency through quality assurance processes such as establishing appropriate criteria, double marking, recording feedback etc. The process is about demonstrating equivalence with the formal curriculum and not replicating it however, and care is taken that the process does not become excessively onerous for you.

The policy at Education for Health is that all RPEL portfolios are double marked prior to the Academic Review Panel meeting. Detailed written feedback should be prepared to be given to the applicant.

If a portfolio is considered insufficient to award credit a judgement should be made by the Academic Review Panel as to the likelihood of success should the applicant resubmit. This decision should be conveyed to the student.

9.4 RPEL Assessment Criteria and Feedback

The assessment criteria applied are relevant to the nature of the learning evidenced and their interpretation clear to all parties. The following QAA criteria are applied to evidence submitted for RPEL:

- **Acceptability:** is there an appropriate match between the evidence presented and the learning being demonstrated? Is the evidence valid and reliable?
- **Sufficiency:** is there sufficient evidence to demonstrate fully the achievement of the learning claimed?
- **Authenticity:** is the evidence clearly related to your own efforts and achievements?
- **Currency:** where HE providers and/or professional, statutory or regulatory bodies have specific requirements and/or time limits for the currency of evidence, certification, or demonstration of learning, these should be made clear and transparent.

9.5 RPEL Administrative Procedure

On receipt of your submission the programme administrator will collate the submission and prepare it for presentation to the Academic Review Panel. The Academic Review Panel will meet to review your submission. The Programme Lead informs the Programme Administrator of the Academic Review Panel decision, providing written documentation to support the decision-making process and written feedback for the student.

The decision made by the Academic Review Panel must be ratified by the External Examiners for the programme. The Programme Administrator will make arrangements for the external examiners to view the submission along with the supporting documentation. The external examiners must provide written confirmation of their ratification of the decision. If there is disagreement this must be overcome by discussion with the Academic Review Panel and External Examiners.

Documentation is filed in the student file. The Programme Administrator updates the RPL record form and conveys the decision to the student.

There is no time limit in relation to the qualifications accepted for direct entry, as listed below.

Direct entry

The following qualifications are recognised and accepted as appropriate to permit direct entry on the programmes awards:

DipHE Award

Applicants enter the programme requiring 120 credits at Level 5 or above to complete:

Award	Credit awarded
Any Health Professional qualification leading to entry onto the register of a UK Health Professional Body	120 at Level 4
Certificated learning equivalent to 120 Credits at Level 4 in a health-related discipline	120 at level 4

BSc (Hons) Award

Award	Credit awarded
Any qualification leading to entry onto the NMC register with the exception of DipHE and BSc or BSc (Hons) in Nursing (any branch)	120 at Level 4
DipHE qualification leading to entry onto the HCPC register	120 at Level 4

Applicants enter the programme requiring 120 credits at Level 5 and 120 credits at Level 6 or above to complete. Please note additional credit of up to 120 credits at level 5 may be awarded as specific credit against relevant modules.

Award	Credit awarded
DipHE, BSc or BSc (Hons) in Nursing (any branch) leading to entry onto the NMC register	120 credits at level 4 and 120 credits at level 5
BSc or BSc (Hons) qualification leading to entry onto the HCPC register	120 at level 4 and 120 credits at level 5
Any qualification leading to entry onto the GMC register	120 at level 4 and 120 credits at level 5

Policy History

Last updated: September 2018

Review method: via Academic Standards Committee, ratified at Academic Board

Review Date

September 2019