

University Policy on Credit Transfer and the Recognition of Prior Learning



Scope

1. This policy provides guidance on the University's requirements for the recognition of prior learning which has been undertaken elsewhere. The policy and procedures apply to individual students and not to institutional arrangements for the recognition of credit. The policy covers cases where an individual wishes to receive credit for one or more modules that form part of a programme of study leading to a Newcastle award on the grounds, they have already achieved the required learning outcomes.
2. The policy applies to any taught modules and taught units in non-modular programmes, including taught modules and units in postgraduate research programmes, subject to the limitations outlined below. Any exemptions to the policy must be approved by the relevant Dean of Education.
3. Study abroad, student exchange agreements and pathway agreements managed by the International Office, and individual applications for direct entry managed through Admissions, are not within the scope of this policy.
4. Non-modular professional degree programmes such as medicine and dentistry are responsible for graduating students who meet the standards of their regulatory bodies i.e. General Medical Council and General Dental Council. Therefore, it is not possible for these programmes to recognise prior learning or credit transfer from another programme of study. Most non-modular programmes require students to study the whole programme and it is unlikely that prior learning or credit transfer would be granted for any of the components of these programmes. However, in circumstances where prior learning or credit transfer may be considered, the minimum level of assessment will be determined by the relevant Degree Programme Director or delegated member of the programme team.
5. All applications must be made prior to entry to the programme and should be made in accordance with the process set out by academic units (include link).

Introduction

6. This policy distinguishes between credit transfer and recognition of prior learning (RPL), defined as follows:
7. Credit Transfer: where the credits or qualification(s) have been awarded by a UK higher education degree-awarding body in accordance with the relevant higher education qualifications framework and QCF.
8. Recognition of prior experiential learning: an assessment process whereby an academic unit recognises a student's learning gained through experience
9. Recognition of prior certificated learning: an assessment process whereby an academic unit recognises prior learning that is at higher education level but that has not led to the award of credits or qualifications positioned on the UK higher education qualifications framework

10. Normally, a student's prior learning will be handled either as credit transfer or as RPL; however, there may be instances when academic units need to consider both (i.e. a student who has a combination of UK credit and experiential knowledge).
11. Decisions to grant credit transfer and RPL under this policy are academic decisions, based on individual students' applications and academic judgement about whether or not the prior learning maps appropriately onto stated learning outcomes for modules at the University.
12. For both credit transfer and RPL, the minimum level of assessment is a module. Students cannot apply for credit for or exemption from part of a module.
13. Academic judgements about prior learning must take 'currency' into account – i.e. the lapse of time since the prior learning took place and/or was credited. Prior learning will only be eligible for credit for or exemption from University modules for a maximum of five years. In subject areas where curriculum content changes rapidly, a shorter time span may be specified in the academic unit's credit transfer/RPL statement.
14. If a student has been awarded credit transfer and/or RPL for a module that is listed as a pre-requisite for another module, then the student will be recognised as having fulfilled the pre-requisite just as if he/she had completed the module.
15. Final responsibility for granting credit transfer or RPL lies with the relevant Degree Programme Director (DPD), although decisions may be delegated to other members of staff. The DPD is responsible for ensuring that the evaluation of prior learning adheres to the University policies on assessment.
16. Every academic unit must have a credit transfer and RPL statement available on its website and accessible to current and prospective students. Statements must include information on how to apply for RPL or credit transfer, how students' information will be handled, the timescale for a decision, and a named contact. Statements are subject to approval by Faculty Education Committee. Individual School statements are available on the [University website for programme regulations and specifications](#).
17. Boards of Studies must consider records of RPL and credit transfer applications (granted and not granted) on an annual basis. Learning and Teaching Reviews will monitor the handling of RPL and credit transfer, and credit transfer/RPL applications should be retained following the School's policy.

Credit Transfer

18. Students may apply for external credit transfer, subject to the maximum number of credits below, if they have earned credit at or validated by another UK higher education institution with degree-awarding powers. Students applying for credit transfer must show evidence of credit that has been earned at the same Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) level (or higher) as the modules identified in the application, and must demonstrate that the number of credits earned was equal to or higher than the number of credits at Newcastle. A student applying for credit transfer would not normally be expected to complete any assessment in addition to submitting an application.

19. Credit transfer is only possible where a student has earned the credits (i.e. passed the module or modules at another institution in the UK). However, it may be possible to transfer module credits in instances where the student did not pass the stage or programme to which the credits originally applied (i.e. if the student originally passed only 40 credits from Stage 1 of a programme at another UK institution and wishes to transfer those credits to a programme at Newcastle).
20. Once an academic unit has decided that a student's application for external credit transfer has been successful, the decision will be recorded on the SAP Student File, confirming the credit value and the name of the original awarding institution. No marks will be retained. If the credit transfer pertains to a module that would normally count toward degree classification, then the Board must calculate the classification based on a weighted average of the reduced number of modules.
21. For undergraduates, credits awarded through credit transfer will be included on a student's Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR); for postgraduates, credits can be included on a student's transcript by individual request and the information recorded within.

Recognition of Prior Learning

22. If a student is not eligible for credit transfer, either because the learning is not certificated at the appropriate FHEQ level or because it was earned outside of a UK institution, he/she may apply for RPL. Applications for RPL will only be considered at the point of admission.
23. Once a student has submitted an initial application for RPL, the DPD should establish what form of assessment will be appropriate to determine that the appropriate learning outcomes have been met. Where a student has provided an international transcript of credit earned and/or evidence of learning outcomes met, it may be appropriate to assess by portfolio (i.e. to make a decision purely based on the evidence provided by the student, including transcripts, syllabi and/or previous examples of marked work). In other instances, and especially in the case of experiential learning, it may be appropriate to require a more stringent form of assessment..
24. The DPD must ensure that assessment for RPL (including by portfolio) follows normal assessment protocol, including receipt of submission, security of assessment, moderation, return of feedback, and retention.
25. Students who receive RPL will receive no credit for the relevant module(s) but will be exempt from taking them within the degree programme regulations, with no requirement to choose alternative modules to make up the credit. In cases where RPL has been approved, the final degree classification shall be determined only on the basis of the modules taken as part of the relevant programme studied at Newcastle. The Board of Examiners must ensure that the decision regarding classification is made in accordance with the weighting specified in the degree programme regulations; if a student has exemption for some modules that would otherwise be factored into classification, then the Board must calculate an average mark on the reduced number of modules, together with the specified weighting.
26. Applying for RPL may not always be to a student's advantage, as it will result in taking fewer modules that would count proportionately more toward the final degree classification. Students in some programmes may also need to take care that they are fulfilling the necessary [Qualifications and Credit Framework \(QCF\)](#) profile for a degree at that level (i.e. that they have taken the requisite number of modules at or above each level).

27. Students who successfully apply for RPL may gain permission to study modules outside of the degree programme regulations or additional optional modules, with DPD approval, up to a full credit load. Any such additional modules would be assessed normally and factored into the student's final degree classification.
28. Students who receive RPL will not be asked to surrender any previous qualification awarded by this or another institution against which credit is being given.

Maximum Permitted RPL and Credit Transfer

29. The maximum number of credits for which credit transfer and/or RPL can be applied is one third (i.e. 120 credits) of a 3-year undergraduate degree, one half (i.e. 240 credits) of a 4-year Integrated Masters degree, and three-fifths of a 5-year degree. Undergraduate students are therefore expected to spend two full-time years at Newcastle University. Any exemptions to this rule of maximum credit must be approved by the relevant Chair of Faculty Education Committee. Students can receive an exit award providing their performance satisfies the award requirements.
30. The maximum number of credits for which credit transfer and/or RPL can be applied is one third of the taught component of taught doctorates and the integrated PhD (i.e. 40 credits). Any exemptions to this rule of maximum credit must be approved by the relevant Dean of Education.
31. The maximum number of credits for which credit transfer and/or RPL can be applied is 20 credits for postgraduate certificates and 40 credits for other postgraduate taught programmes (diploma or masters), unless an individual exemption is approved by the relevant Dean of Education. Any such exemption is restricted to a maximum of 30 credits for postgraduate certificates and 60 credits for postgraduate diplomas or masters.

Notes

32. Students should be mindful that the award of credit transfer or RPL may impact on their registration status, which may in turn affect their compliance with student finance and/ or visa conditions.
33. Partnership proposals involving *automatic entry with advanced standing* need to be drawn up with reference to the [University's Educational Partnerships Policy](#).
34. Students may apply for direct entry into Stage 2 of an undergraduate programme or Stage 3 of an Integrated Masters programme through UCAS. In these instances, Admissions will liaise directly with the relevant selector in the academic unit to consider the student's qualifications. Although bound by the same credit limits, this situation is considered neither credit transfer nor RPL and is outside the scope of this policy.

Policy last modified July 2018. Updated by EPGS – August 2023	
Intended for use by:	All academic staff, in particular DPDs, module leaders, admissions selectors Faculty Learning & Teaching teams
Contact (for queries about this document):	educational.policy.governance@ncl.ac.uk

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Appendix 1 – Application for Credit Transfer or Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Any student who wishes to apply for credit transfer or RPL should use this form, which should be returned to an appropriate and identified person in the academic unit. Before completing this form, students must read the Newcastle University guidelines AND speak with the named contact in his/her academic unit about the application process.

All students MUST complete Sections 1, 2, and 3.

In applications for RPL, Sections 4 and 5 should be completed by the relevant DPD. These sections can be left blank in applications for credit transfer.

All DPDs MUST complete Section 6, and academic units must keep the entire application on file, following the Return of Assessed Work policy.

Section 1 – Student Identification

Name:
Email:
Academic Unit:
Student Number (if already registered at Newcastle University):
Programme of study to which this application applies:
*Unit to which this application is submitted:

*Single Honours, PGT and PGR students should submit applications to the School/Institute that runs their degree programme. Joint Honours and Combined Honours students should submit applications to their Joint Honours tutor or the Combined Honours Centre rather than to the School offering the module(s) for which they are applying.

Section 2 – Credit Transfer vs. Recognition of Prior Learning

Based on the definitions, tick one of the following: External credit transfer, internal credit transfer, RPCL, or RPEL. If you are applying for more than one on the same application (i.e. credit transfer AND RPEL, for different modules), then you can tick more than one.

External credit transfer: where credits or qualification(s) have been awarded by another UK university

Recognition of prior certificated learning: where credits or qualification(s) have been awarded by a non-UK university or institution

Recognition of prior experiential learning: where you have previous experience (e.g. work experience) that maps onto the learning outcomes of a module

Section 3 – Newcastle University module(s) and Form(s) of evidence

In the template below, the student should list any module(s) for which he/she is seeking credit transfer or RPL. In the right-hand column, all available evidence should be listed: transcripts, module outlines or syllabi, assessed work, supporting statements from employers, etc. If a student is seeking credit transfer or RPL for an entire stage of a programme, all relevant modules should be listed separately. All evidence should be submitted with the application. An example is provided below.

Module Title	Module Code	Form of Evidence
<i>Japanese Basket Weaving</i>	<i>ART1234</i>	<i>Transcript from Northern England University, module outline, assessed basket</i>

Student Signature:

Date:

Section 4 – Assessment of RPL (does not need to be completed for applications for credit transfer)

In the template below, the DPD should specify what form of assessment will be required to assess the student’s eligibility for RPL. The assessment must follow from the learning objectives of the module(s).

Module Code	Learning Objectives	Required Assessment

Section 5 – Record of Assessment and Feedback Return

Feedback on RPL assessment should be returned to students with 20 working days. For record-keeping purposes, academic units should complete this section after the decision has been made.

Module Code	Assessment Task Pass/Fail	Date of Feedback to Student

Section 6 – Record of Credit Transfer and/or RPL Granted

For each module code below, the DPD should record the final decision made as to credit transfer or RPL. If internal credit transfer has been granted, the mark should be noted.

Module Code	Internal/External Credit Transfer	RPL

DPD Signature:

Date:

This form should be returned to the programme secretary and, if appropriate, the relevant admissions team, so that the final decision can be recorded on the SAP student record.

Appendix 2 – Assessing the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

If a student is not eligible for credit transfer, either because the learning is not certificated at the appropriate FHEQ level or because it was earned outside of a UK institution, he/she may apply for RPL. Unlike credit transfer, which is based on evidence of credit received (e.g. a transcript) and evidence of learning outcomes achieved (e.g. a syllabus), RPL should be assessed in some way to ensure that the student is fully eligible to receive exemption from Newcastle modules.

Who should make decisions about assessment?

The Degree Programme Director (DPD) is responsible for determining an appropriate form of assessment to determine that the relevant learning outcomes have been met. The DPD may consult with the relevant module leader(s) and may delegate responsibility to module leaders.

Prior Certificated Learning

Where a student has provided an international transcript of credit earned, plus a module outline or syllabus to demonstrate learning outcomes met, and where learning outcomes map neatly onto those of the Newcastle module(s), it may be appropriate to assess by portfolio (i.e. to make a decision based purely on the evidence provided).

If the evidence is indeterminate, the student should be asked to meet with the DPD and/or module leader for an assessed interview, to talk through the prior learning and the evidence provided. In this instance, clear criteria for the interview should be provided in advance (i.e. the student should not be assessed on the quality of his/her oral presentation skills, unless that is an intended learning outcome of the module, but on his/her ability to explain the prior learning and link it to the learning outcomes of the Newcastle module).

Where a Newcastle module has learning outcomes that can only be demonstrated through a specific assessment type (e.g. an oral presentation), the DPD should review the evidence provided to ensure that the learning outcome has been met. If the evidence is indeterminate, or if the student has not met that specific learning outcome, a form of assessment should be devised to ensure that the student is capable of meeting the outcome at an appropriate level. For example, the student could be asked to give an oral presentation outlining what he/she had learned previously. In such instances, clear criteria for the assessment should be provided in advance, and assessment protocols (i.e. moderation) must follow standard University policy.

Prior Experiential Learning

Where a student has provided evidence of prior experience (e.g. work experience), the standard assessment should be either an assessed interview or a reflective writing exercise, so that the student can work through his/her prior learning and map it onto the Newcastle module(s). The decision to use an interview or a reflective writing exercise should be based on the learning outcomes of the Newcastle module(s). Clear criteria for either assessment should be provided in advance, and assessment protocols (i.e. moderation) must follow standard University policy.

If the Newcastle module has learning outcomes that can only be demonstrated through a specific assessment type, other than an assessed interview or a reflective writing exercise, then either the student must provide evidence of having completed an appropriate task (e.g. an industrial report) or an alternative method of assessment must be determined.

Feedback to Students

In line with University policy, feedback on RPL assessments must be returned to students within 20 working days.

Recording and Monitoring of RPL Assessment

RPL assessment tasks and decisions should be recorded and kept on the application form provided and should be made available for review by external examiners and Learning and Teaching Review Managers (as part of the QA Summary).

Appendix 3 – Recording of Credit Transfer and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) decisions

Entering decisions on to the SAP student record ensures that there is a permanent, centrally accessible record of awards of Credit Transfer and RPL.

Once entered, the information will feed through to the student transcript and HEAR. In the event that the automatic feed fails, the use of standard wording as provided below will simplify the production of one-off manual transcripts or letters that a student may require.

Who should record decisions?

When Credit Transfer or RPL decisions are made as part of the admissions process, the recording of decisions should be completed by the relevant admissions team.

External Credit Transfer

The SAP Note Overview section of the Student File must be completed.

- Select note type ***** TBC*****
- Add the following text:

The student has been granted Credit Transfer to the value of [] credits, based on previous studies undertaken at [name of UK HEI e.g. Liverpool University]

- For Credit Transfer for a full Programme Stage:

*The credit transfer applies to the entire Stage [1] of the following degree programme:
[programme code and title]*

And/ or:

- For all instances of credit transfer:

Full details of previous studies are retained by the student.

Date of decision: [DATE]

NOTE: For external credit transfer, no marks are recorded.

Recognition of Prior Learning (experiential and certificated)

The SAP Note Overview section of the Student File must be completed.

- Select note type ***** TBC*****
- Add the following text:

The student is exempt from the following, to the value of [] credits, having been assessed for Recognition of Prior Learning:

- For RPL for a full Programme Stage:

*Recognition of Prior Learning applies to the entire Stage [1] of the following degree programme:
[programme code and title]*

And/ or:

- For RPL under the value of one Programme Stage:

Recognition of Prior Learning applies to the following Newcastle University modules:

[module codes and titles covered by the successful RPL application to be listed here]

- For Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning only:

The application for Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning was based on the student's previous studies undertaken at [name of non-UK HEI e.g. Colorado State University, USA]

- For all RPL:

Full details of previous studies/ experience are retained by the student.

Date of decision: [DATE]

NOTE: For RPL, no marks are recorded.