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## 1. Introduction

New City College (NCC) has successfully operated a process of Recognising Prior (certificated) Learning (RPL) for many years.

Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) is not accepted by NCC for entry on to Higher Education programmes and is therefore not covered by this Policy.

This policy document sets out the College's regulations and procedures for managing RPL across its portfolio of Higher Education programmes and qualifications.

RPL is an established component of UK HE practice. RPL is the mechanism through which students who have accumulated credit on an HE programme at one Further Education College (FEC) or Higher Education Institution (HEI) may transfer to a comparable HE programme at a different FEC or HEI and take the credits that they have accumulated for previous study with them. The credits previously accumulated are then 'offset' against the programme of study, enabling the student to complete an HE programme with a limited amount of disruption to their studies.

The College recognises two forms of RPL:

- Recognition of prior certificated learning (RPCL) where previous certificated learning is mapped to the learning outcomes of the module/units or stage at NCC using evidence from the applicant's previous certificated study. Credit is awarded against modules/units or stages(s) at the same level where there is an obvious similarity between the previous study and the study for which they are seeking exemption. Credit from the previous study is therefore transferred to the new programme through a process of credit transfer.
- Direct Entry (stage exemption) where a student holds an appropriate prior qualification and directly enters a programme at level 5 or 6.
- Where a student holds an overseas qualification, the level of the award will be confirmed though UK ENIC (UK National Information Centre), previously known as UK NARIC).

## 2. Limits to the recognition of prior (certificated) learning

There is an upper limit on the amount of credits that can be transferred between programmes and institutions, i.e. normally two-thirds<sup>1</sup> of the total credit requirements for

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<sup>1</sup> *Two-thirds is only applicable to full undergraduate Bachelors degrees and post graduate masters degrees. For all other awards (Foundation Degrees, Cert HE & DIP HE, 50% is the maximum amount permitted.*

that award as per the College's assessment regulations. Therefore, students may or may not have all their previous study accredited, depending on the amount of RPL being requested and/or the compatibility of the content of the previous and proposed programmes of study.

Students entering a validated qualification level 6 'top-up' programme, comprising 120 credits and designed to build on a lower credit bearing award, may not enter the programme with credit. Similarly, credit for prior certificated learning is not allowed at the final stage of a Bachelor's degree or for the thesis/dissertation on a Master's programme.

The minimum amount of credit allowed to be claimed through RPL is 15 credits which is currently our smallest credit bearing module size.

The following regulations and procedures will be applied to all Bath Spa programmes offered by the College. The only permissible variance from these regulations and procedures will be where the validating university has their own RPL procedures and regulations which must be followed to maintain the integrity of the qualification. Currently students who are studying a Higher Education Programme with the Bath Spa.

### **3. General Principles**

The following General Principles will be used to determine the outcome of all applications for RPL submitted to HE Curriculum Teams at NCC.

- a. NCC only considers applications for the Recognition of Prior (certificated) Learning (RPCL). Applications for the Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) will not be considered as alternatives to traditional academic qualifications at entry to HE programmes by NCC, this is because experiential learning does not have credits attached and is difficult to quantify.
- b. Applications for direct entry on HE programmes via RPL will only be considered from students who have secured a place on a HE programme at NCC, this is because all students must meet the entry requirements for individual programmes.
- c. Applications for RPL will only be considered prior to commencement on the programme.
- d. Applications for RPL will not be considered retrospectively.
- e. Credit or recognition can only be awarded on the provision of evidence of recognised learning from a FEC, HEI or recognised HE provider or awarding body/organisation by providing a transcript of the programme with modules/units studied and credits awarded.

- f. The evidence used to seek RPL must be **current or recent**, i.e. achieved within the previous five (5) academic years.
- g. The evidence used to seek RPL must be **authentic**, i.e. must be proven to belong to the applicant who is using it to claim credit. The authenticity of claims will be determined via the provision, by the applicant, of certificates and/or qualifications, programme transcripts, letters from HEIs/FECs and recognised HE providers on headed paper indicating the amount of credit achieved or Diploma Supplements.
- h. The evidence used to seek RPL must be **relevant** to the programme of study to which the student has been admitted, e.g. a student with credits for Engineering modules cannot RPL modules on a Social Work programme and vice versa.
- i. The evidence used to seek RPL must be **sufficient**, i.e. enough to substantiate the claim for credit for particular modules or levels of study, on specific programmes.
- j. Students joining programmes and seeking to secure RPL for full and partial level completion will, normally, only be offered credit transfer in relation to two-thirds<sup>2</sup> of the total credits requirements of that programme. Where partial level completion is concerned, there must be a close match between the modules the student has previously completed and the module requirements of the programme they are joining.
- k. RPL will not, normally, be awarded for modules that are identified as 'Prerequisite study', i.e. core modules for levels and /or programmes of study, unless there is a close match between the student's prior learning and the requirements of the programme they are joining.
- l. Course Teams will indicate to students applying for RPL any differences or additions to this Policy, General Principles and Procedures, that arise from the requirements of an external Professional, Regulatory or Statutory Body, e. g. those regulating Counselling (British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)) and Teaching etc.
- m. RPL will not be awarded for qualifications determined as entry requirements for HE programmes at the College, i.e. lower level study than that of the programme to be studied.
- n. RPL will be shown as such on the student's transcript whereby transfer of credit has been allowed for direct entry, the transcript will state stage exemption on a student's transcript.

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<sup>2</sup> Two-thirds is only applicable to full undergraduate Bachelors degrees and post graduate masters degrees. For all other awards (Foundation Degrees, Cert HE & DIP HE, 50% is the maximum amount permitted).

- o. A mapping exercise of the units/modules previously completed and awarded against the programme applied for will be carried out by the relevant academic team. This will be an academic judgement. The records of the mapping exercise will be forwarded by the relevant curriculum area to the HE Quality Department for final approval.
- p. Where a credit or recognition of prior learning has been made, the credit or recognition is not taken into account in the calculation of the final award.

#### **4. Recognition of Prior Learning - transfers between HE Programmes**

Applicants for RPL who have successfully completed part of a degree or HE programme at an FEC or HEI in the UK, including programmes leading to Bath Spa University awards, may be admitted with specific credit to a programme at the College, at an appropriate point, through this RPL procedure.

Examples of such admissions with specific credit are as follows:

- Specific credit may be granted for the satisfactory, partial, completion of studies which were part of a Cert HE, Dip HE or Honours Degree;
- Successful completion of a Cert HE may allow entry with specific credit to a Dip HE, Foundation Degree or Honours Degree programme;
- Successful completion of a Dip HE may allow a student to transfer to the third year of a full-time Honours Degree or to the equivalent stage of a part-time programme;
- Successful completion of a Foundation Degree programme may allow a student to transfer to the third year of an Honours Degree or to the equivalent stage of a part-time programme.

#### **5. RPL - vocational and professional qualifications**

Applicants holding vocational or professional qualifications may be admitted with specific credit to an appropriate point on a programme. These qualifications may have been completed at the College or a different institution or through employment.

Examples include:

Applicants holding a Higher National Certificate or Diploma from Pearson may be considered for admission with specific credit, normally to the start of the second year of a three-year full-time programme, or to the equivalent stage of a part-time programme.

This will be an academic judgement. Records will be forwarded to HE Quality for final approval.

Applicants for RPL may be admitted to the third year of an Honours Degree where suitable articulation or bridging provisions are in place.

## **6. The award of credits through RPL**

### Curriculum Mapping

In this case, using evidence from the applicants' previous study, the curriculum team maps the content of previous certificated learning against the learning outcomes, content, teaching and learning approaches, assessment, and standards of modules on the HE programme, at the College, which the applicant is joining.

Credit is awarded to the modules or levels of study where there is an obvious similarity between the previous study and the programme they are joining.

All records related to RPL, including the curriculum mapping exercise, will be maintained by the HE Quality. The department will monitor the progress and retention of students where RPL was applied, to check the efficacy of the RPL process. Outcomes will be reported annually to the Higher Education Committee.

## **7. Fees payable in light of RPL**

Students who are awarded credits from partial completion of previous study will pay fees on the balance of credits/modules needed to complete the level of study; and then fees for all subsequent levels of study up to the completion of the qualification, i.e. Foundation Degree, Honours Degree etc.

Students who join an HE programme at the College with a qualification from previous study, and who do not need to complete any bridging modules, will pay fees for the levels of study they complete at the College. For example, Cert HE – fees for Levels 5 and 6; Dip HE or Foundation Degree fees for Level 6.

Students who join a HE programme at the College with a qualification from previous study but who need to complete some bridging modules, will pay fees for the bridging modules required to complete levels of study within the programme. Students will then pay fees for subsequent levels of study they complete at NCC. For example, a student who has 120 credits at Level 4, plus 60 credits from Level 5 accredited; will then pay fees for 60 credits to complete Level 5, before paying fees to take Level 6 of a degree programme.

Fees payable will form part of the student contract and terms and conditions. Fee costs of programmes are advertised on the College website for prospective students.

## **8. Monitoring of Policy**

This policy is monitored on an annual basis, and amendments are made as a result of changes in the internal and external environment.

## **9. Appeal against RPL decision**

If a student is not satisfied with a RPL decision, they have the right to appeal that decision by referring to the Admissions Appeal Policy. This can be found on the College website.