Manchester Metropolitan University

Policy for the Recognition of Prior Learning

About this policy

The Policy for the Recognition of Prior Learning sets out the principles applied for awarding exemptions from aspects of University programmes on the basis of prior learning.

Introduction

1.1 This policy articulates the arrangements for the management of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) at Manchester Metropolitan University. It enables the University to ensure that the principles of RPL are applied consistently across the institution. The policy is informed by the Quality Assurance Agency's **UK Quality Code for Higher Education** which sets out the following expectation:

'Higher education providers have in place equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the award.'

Scope

2.1 RPL enables Manchester Met to endorse the knowledge and skills that students bring with them when they embark on a programme of study. Manchester Met allows students who provide evidence of prior learning exemption from aspects of their academic programme if they can demonstrate their existing knowledge and skills meet the requirements of that programme.

2.2 Manchester Met recognises learning that is undertaken outside of, but within the duration of an approved University programme, providing that the Curriculum and Assessment Framework for Taught Programmes supports this. All statements within this policy relating to 'prior learning' will apply equally to this type of learning.

2.3 RPL can be defined as:

Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL)

Previously-awarded credit for HElevel learning which has been formally assessed and/or accredited may be used towards the credit requirements of a Manchester Met award. Evidence to support an RPCL claim may include a formal certificate, transcript of results and/or evidence of assessment from a University, College or Professional Body.

Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)

Informal learning gained from experience can be assessed to provide credit towards a Manchester Met award. This learning may have been undertaken in a range of contexts including paid and voluntary work, and individual activities and interests.

2.4 Credit awarded for RPCL can be defined as: Specific

The prior learning corresponds directly to the syllabus and learning outcomes of the relevant Manchester Met provision; General

The prior learning does not correspond to a particular Manchester Met unit of study but reflects the learning outcomes of elements of the programme.

2.5 This policy is concerned solely with individual claims for RPL. It does not apply in the following circumstances:

• Where students are to be exempted from parts of a Manchester Met programme through an approved Articulation Arrangement, the University's **Articulation Arrangement Policy** will apply.

• Where applicants who do not satisfy standard entry requirements are requesting entry to the start of a Manchester Met course the University's **Recruitment and Admissions Policy** will apply.

• Where students have previously undertaken, but not completed, a Manchester Met programme and wish to recommence at the start of the same, or a different programme, the University's **Recruitment and Admissions Policy** will apply.

• Where applicants for apprenticeship programmes satisfy recognition of prior learning identified in their individualised learner eligibility assessment, the Education and Skills

Funding Agency (ESFA) Apprenticeship Funding Rules will apply.

following situations, and as such RPL claims will not be required:

• Where applicants are requesting advanced entry to level 5 or 6 of a Manchester Met Undergraduate programme, **the University's standard application procedures for Undergraduate programmes** will apply

• Where applicants are requesting advanced entry to the Diploma or Masters stage of a Manchester Met programme, having gained a Postgraduate Certificate or Postgraduate Diploma in a cognate subject from another Higher Education provider, the **University's standard application procedures for Postgraduate programmes** will apply.

• Where students have previously undertaken but not completed a Manchester Met programme, and wish to resume their enrolment at the point from which they departed the programme, the University's standard application procedures for **Undergraduate** or **Postgraduate** Programmes of study apply.

• Where applicants for apprenticeship programmes have had recognition of prior learning and experience necessary to achieve occupational competence identified through the initial skills analysis prior to starting their apprenticeship programme.

Principles for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

3.1 Manchester Met is responsible for the academic standards of all credit awarded in its name. Credit granted via RPL is awarded in accordance with the requirements of the University's **Curriculum Framework** and the **QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications** and has equal standing to credit achieved through Manchester Met programmes.

3.2 The process of recognising prior learning is based on an analysis of the skills and knowledge gained and the proposed programme of study. Manchester Met awards credit for RPL solely on the basis of demonstrable learning, not the experience itself.

3.3 All claims, including those submitted by students undertaking Manchester Met provision at approved Collaborative Partner institutions, are considered fairly and consistently. All RPL claims will be subject to internal moderation and external scrutiny.

3.4 Staff responsible for RPL have their roles clearly defined, and receive support in delivering their responsibilities.

3.5 Approved RPL credits will not be assigned a grade by Manchester Met and award classifications will be calculated using only those marks achieved for units studied at the University. Under no circumstances will marks awarded for prior learning by other institutions be included within Manchester Met award classifications.

3.6 Students are permitted to claim RPL for units that have received condoned or compensated marks at other accredited UK Higher Education Institutions, provided that all requirements of this policy are met. In such cases, the Manchester Met **Assessment Regulations** regarding compensation will apply, and the compensated RPL credits will be counted towards the total number of compensated credits that the student is permitted.

Thresholds for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

4.1 RPL cannot be used to gain a Manchester Met award in its entirety. With the exception of specific circumstances prescribed by the Nursing and Midwifery Council Standards, at least 50% of the credit required for conferment of the target award must be studied as part of an approved programme of study.

4.2 For students who exit a programme at an interim stage before reaching the target award, RPL can be used to gain a maximum of 50% of the credits required for conferment of the interim award.

4.3 Where students apply for a Level 6 Top-Up award having gained a Diploma of Higher Education elsewhere, they must undertake a minimum of 90 Manchester Met credits in order to have an Honours degree conferred.

4.4 The credit thresholds referred to above may only be waived in the case of:

- students who enter an honours degree programme with the maximum credits from RPCL, but later exit at the ordinary degree stage. In such cases 180 out of 300 credits may be awarded via RPCL.

- students entering a one year honours "top-up" or conversion degree having achieved a Diploma of Higher Education elsewhere but later exit at the ordinary degree stage. In such cases, students will be required to successfully complete 60 Manchester Met credits at Level 6.

4.5 All RPL claims are considered on the basis of the match of learning outcomes, curriculum content, level of study and credit value of the prior learning against that of the relevant Manchester Met provision. Consideration of RPL claims is a matter of academic judgment, although claimants are normally required to demonstrate a match of at least 70% of the relevant learning outcomes.

4.6 RPL may be claimed against:

- a specific whole unit;

- multiple whole units;

- a combination of one whole level plus one whole unit;

- a combination of one whole level plus multiple whole units.

4.7 Claims cannot be made against part of a unit and RPL will only be approved against current units within a programme of study.

4.8 Credit awarded through successful RPL claims, can only be awarded once and cannot be double-counted. Under no circumstances are students permitted to count the same RPL credit towards two or more awards at the same level.

4.9 RPL may not be claimed against supervised independent study units including dissertation and/or projects.

4.10 RPL is not appropriate for every programme/unit offered by Manchester Met. Programmes/units may prohibit the use of RPL due to Professional, Statutory and/or Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements or where an award is validated on the basis of requiring all students to be assessed for the full award. Such exclusions are detailed in the relevant Programme Specification.

4.11 Claims for the Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL) are only considered if the prior learning was undertaken at the same level as, or at a higher level than the relevant Manchester Met provision. 4.12 The amount of prior credit achieved through RPCL must be equal to, or greater than the credit value of the relevant Manchester Met provision for which exemption is being sought.

The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Process

5.1 The responsibility for making an RPL claim rests with the student. **Guidance on the application process is available on the Manchester Met website**.

5.2 Students intending to make an RPL claim must first have received an offer of a place on a Manchester Met programme. RPL is only awarded against the Manchester Met programme for which an offer of admission has been made and is not transferable.

5.3 All students wishing to submit an RPL claim are supported by an academic advisor who is a member of Manchester Met (or, where appropriate, Collaborative Partner) academic staff with expertise in the relevant subject area. For programmes accredited by PSRB's, the academic advisor must be aware of any specific PSRB requirements. Guidance on the role of the academic advisor is available.

5.4 All RPL claims are assessed by at least two assessors who have not previously been involved in the claim. Assessors are members of academic staff with expertise in the relevant subject area. Academic members of Collaborative Partner staff may be involved in assessing RPL claims, providing that at least one assessor is from Manchester Met. When considering claims for exemption from programmes accredited by PSRBs, assessors will always be appropriately qualified. RPL claims for Combined/Joint Honours programmes are assessed by academic colleagues with combined expertise in all relevant subject areas. Guidance on the role of the assessor is available on the Manchester Met website.

5.5 In all cases the **RPL Claim Form** should be completed and submitted to the relevant Faculty, along with appropriate evidence to support the claim. The claim form includes a mapping template that allows the student to demonstrate how their prior learning matches the requirements of the Manchester Met provision. All claims must be supported by evidence of prior learning which:

- is relevant to the Manchester Met programme of study;

- has been gained recently enough to be of value in achieving current learning outcomes (NB Subject experts will exercise academic judgement when assessing whether the currency of prior learning is appropriate but qualifications more than five years old will normally not be accepted);

- sufficiently demonstrates the full achievement of the credit being claimed;

- is authentic and can be verified as being the student's own work;

- is equivalent to the content of the Manchester provision from which the student is seeking exemption;

- has been written in English.

5.6 Faculties which receive a large number of RPL applications may establish an RPL Committee for the purpose of assessing RPL claims.

5.7 All RPL claims must be made in sufficient time so that the outcomes can be reported to the relevant Assessment Board. Claims are normally considered and outcomes notified to students within four weeks of receipt (except during University closure at Christmas).

Wherever possible, this takes place prior to the student commencing the unit/programme of study. If a decision has not been made, the student must attend and submit any appropriate assessment for those elements of the programme for which RPL is being sought, until the outcome of the claim is communicated to them.

5.8 A record of RPL activity and a sample of claims is considered by External Examiners to provide the independent assurance regarding the equitability and effectiveness of the application of RPL.

5.9 All students are notified in writing of the outcome of their RPL claim. Students whose claims are unsuccessful are entitled to receive timely written or verbal feedback from the University, indicating the basis upon which the claim is rejected. Feedback is normally provided by one of the RPL Assessors who considered the claim.

5.10 RPL claims for non-Manchester Met credit transfers are subject to a reduced tuition fee based on the number of credits claimed. Please refer to the **Finance webpage** for confirmation of the current amount payable per unit. The RPL fee is reviewed annually and published prior to the commencement of each academic year. All RPL fees are non-refundable.

Recording & Monitoring the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

6.1 All RPL records including claim forms and evidence submitted to support claims are maintained in line with the **University's Records Management Policy**.

6.2 Assessors record all decisions relating to RPL claims, along with details of the basis upon which the decision was reached.

6.3 Approved RPL credit is recorded within the University's Student Record System, reported to the relevant Assessment Board and reflected on the student's transcript

6.4 The RPL process is monitored at Faculty level, through feedback sought from successful and unsuccessful applicants.

6.5 The academic progress of individual students who enter a Manchester Met programme with approved RPL credit is tracked through standard University processes for performance monitoring such as Assessment Boards and Student Engagement Management.

6.6 Programme Leaders are responsible for monitoring a programme's RPL activity and raising any specific issues at Programme Committee meetings or via the Education Annual Review process. Programme Leaders notify the Chair of the Faculty Education Committee of any issues that may need to be addressed at University level, for inclusion in the annual RPL Monitoring Report.

6.7 The Chair of the Faculty Education Committee is responsible for maintaining Faculty level oversight of all RPL activity and for reporting to Academic Standards on an annual basis via the Faculty RPL Monitoring Report. The report provides an overview of the Faculty's RPL activity, highlights any good practice and includes any issues including those raised via feedback from applicants, which may need to be considered at University level.

6.8 The University maintains central oversight of RPL through the Annual Report on Quality and Standards.

Additional Information

This Procedure forms part of the University's regulatory framework. Other institutional Policies and Procedures that relate to Assessment include:

- **Undergraduate Assessment Regulations**
- **Taught Postgraduate Assessment Regulations**
- **Procedure for Addressing Academic Misconduct**
- **Procedure for Academic Appeals and Review of Assessment-Related Matters**
- **Student Complaints Procedure**

Support and Guidance

Further support and guidance in relation to these Regulations is available from the following locations:

Student Hubs:
Student Hub Information Page

Students' Union Advice Centre
www.theunionmmu.org/your-advice-centre
Tel: **0161 247 6533**
Email: **s.u.advice@mmu.ac.uk**

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