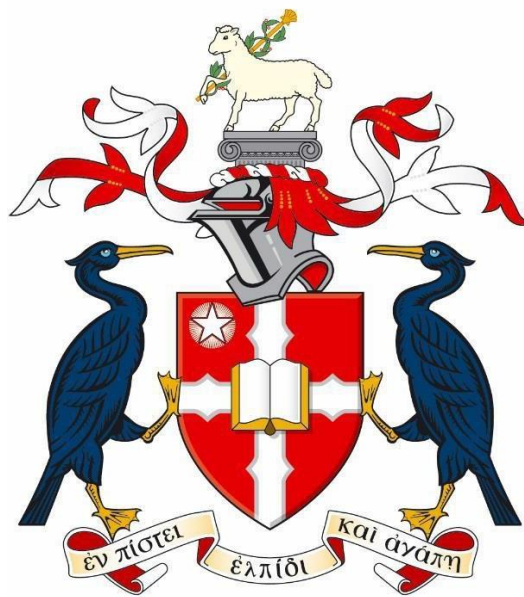


Liverpool Hope University



Academic Quality Handbook (QH11):

**Policy on Recognition of Prior Learning
including admission by
Advanced Standing and Credit Transfer.**

Document Control

Responsibility for Policy:	Registrar
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Related Policies:	QH13 Recruitment and Admission Policy Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
Revisions:	May 2025 Updates to add Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) and reference to Degree Apprenticeships as appropriate to the developments in the University portfolio.
Revisions approved by:	Senate 25 th June 2025
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Introduction and Definitions

- A. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the generic term used for the award of credits on the basis of demonstrated learning which has taken place in the past. RPL allows students who are enrolling on award bearing taught programmes of study at the University to claim “credit” for previous learning. The previous learning must be relevant to the programme for which they are applying, and if their application is successful, the credit will count towards their chosen programme of study.
- B. *Degree apprenticeship programmes fall within the scope of this policy. This policy aligns with the expectations and core practices of the Education Skills Funding Agency¹ guide for Apprenticeships, the Office for Students Regulatory Framework for Higher Education and the conditions of registration, and Ofsted’s Further Education and Skills Inspection Handbook, ensuring that the assessment of claims for credit by the recognition of prior learning are reliable, fair and transparent. RPL may be used by Learners as evidence of prior attainment of Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs) for Degree Apprenticeship programmes only.*
- C. As set out in relevant national guidance², there are two main categories within the recognition of prior learning:
- Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning – RPCL is a term which refers specifically to the recognition of certificated learning through the assignment of credit. This is learning which has been formally assessed by a recognised educational provider and for which an academic transcript or equivalent formal documentation is available.
 - Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning – RPEL the formal recognition of prior learning gained through other experience, including paid or unpaid work, volunteering, self-directed study, study for which no credit has been awarded (whether certificated or uncertificated), or through leisure pursuits. It is the learning that has been gained through this experience rather than the experience itself that may be recognised through this policy.
- D. Liverpool Hope will consider applications for both RPCL and RPEL. All applicants applying through this policy must be treated equitably regardless of the sources of the prior learning that is being considered or the age, gender, marital status, ethnicity, disability, religious belief or sexual orientation of the applicant.
- E. Prior learning, that is at a lower level than the programme being undertaken, may be taken into account in determining suitability for admission to an award of the University but will not be considered for RPL directly.

¹ The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) functions are under review and alignment to the successor, new entity or future equivalent body will remain..

² [QAA guide to credit recognition](#)

- F. *When related to Degree Apprenticeships, RPEL is the process which enables apprentices to map previously acquired KSBs against the relevant Apprenticeship standard. Credit is not released, but a reduction in off the job learning hours or a reduced programme cost could result from such a claim.*
- G. Advanced Standing, is a form of RPCL which recognises former students of the University who wish to transfer credit to the same course they have already partially completed and have these credits accepted in order to complete that award. In this case the student's previous record while at the University will be considered. Applications for Credit Transfer enable credits from an alternative course at Hope to be accepted as part of a new course at Hope. Students wishing to apply for Credit Transfer should complete the appropriate application form³.
- H. PhD degrees are outside the scope of this policy because they are awarded solely on the basis of assessment of the thesis and there are no credit values attached to such programmes. Entry to Postdoctoral Research Degrees is considered in the Liverpool Hope Postdoctoral Research Regulations and Code of Practice.

1) Policy Statements

- 1.1 All applications for RPL must be made and approved prior to entry to the programme in question, unless the School/Faculty concerned has agreed that exceptional circumstances apply. In all cases, RPL must be approved prior to starting the relevant unit/ module(s) from which exemption is sought.
- 1.2 No RPL award may be given which implies partial completion of a course unit at the previous provider. Credit can only be given for whole units/modules and not for individual assessment components within a module.
- 1.3 RPL will not be granted in circumstances where this would result in the applicant being unable to meet Professional Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB) or apprenticeship standards
- 1.4 For Degree Apprenticeships, RPL may not be claimed against the integrated end-point-assessment if this is precluded by the apprenticeship standard.
- 1.5 The Assessment Criteria for judging RPCL claims are:
 - **Authenticity** – is the evidence genuine, and is the achievement clearly the applicant's own?
 - **Relevance and Validity** – is the learning demonstrated by the evidence relevant to the target programme of study at the University? This means it must be at the same level, meet similar learning outcomes, and cover a similar knowledge and skills base. The level, learning outcomes and knowledge base need not be identical but must be close to those in the target programme. does the evidence support the claim? Is it relevant to

³ Application forms found [here](#)

the learning outcomes for the area(s) and are the learning, knowledge, skills and achievements demonstrated through the evidence at an acceptable level?

- **Sufficiency** – is there sufficient evidence to support the claim?
- **Currency** – is the learning current - i.e., the date of the qualification is still current; normally 5 (five) years is considered the maximum at which learning is still relevant. It should be noted that the decision in relation to currency is subject-specific and some learning may not be current much earlier than this. Conversely, in some cases older certified learning may be approved subject to the candidate being able to demonstrate continued engagement in the field, for example via relevant publications in the field, CPD or wider engagement with the relevant profession.
- **Regulatory** – the applicant meets any wider regulatory / PSRB requirements.

1.6 Maximum total RPCL – Application can be made for **exemption** up to the following limits:

Undergraduate

- 1.6.1 The maximum credits which can normally be awarded under RPL is normally **120** credits against a 360 credit (three-year, full time) undergraduate programme.
- 1.6.2 In exceptional circumstances, and with specific approval, exemption of 120 credits may be sought against a 240 credit Foundation Degree. In such cases evidence of both academic credit and placement-based learning or experiential learning will be required.
- 1.6.3 RPL may be sought for exemption of credits against provision offered at Level 4 (Year One) and Level 5 (Year 2) dependent upon the Level and programme of study already completed (and in line with 1.6.1).
- 1.6.4 RPL claims are most appropriate against entry into Level 5. However, RPL applications into Level 6 will be considered on a case-by-case basis by either a Special Cases Panel or, where appropriate, by the Dean of Global Engagement, the Subject nominated representative and the Head of School or nominee (this applies where the applicant is from a recognised international partner and an extensive mapping exercise has taken place).

Postgraduate

- 1.6.5 The maximum credits which can be awarded under RPL is **60 or 50% of the award's credit rating, whichever is the lower**. Exemptions from this maximum credit rule may be agreed and any such exceptions must be approved by the Chair of Academic Committee (or nominee) but the following may not enable RPL claims be made against the postgraduate dissertation or consultancy project reports.
- 1.6.6 RPL is not normally permitted into courses which are regulated by professional bodies because of the professional requirements and

standards of the Award. Individual requests may be considered on a case-by-case basis but the requirement of the regulatory body must be paramount in the decision-making process.

2) Principles

- 2.1 Decisions regarding the accreditation of prior learning are a matter of academic judgment, with the main consideration being whether the prior learning is broadly equivalent to the learning that would otherwise have been assessed during the course unit.
- 2.2 *When attributing prior learning to degree apprenticeship programmes the Assessor should work with the employer to consider whether the learning demonstrates the specific attainment of duties and KSB'S required in the apprenticeship. If modules at the relevant level need not be studied then they cannot be funded - only new learning can be funded. The Assessor must therefore consider what constitutes new learning and the impact that higher level critical thinking can have on the advancement of skills and behaviours, even if an apprentice has significant experience.*
- 2.3 Overseas applicants may apply for RPL in the same way as UK and EU applicants. All qualifications and institutions will be checked by the University along with all other relevant requirements (such as visa and immigration conditions). It is the responsibility of the applicant to make sure that all evidence and supporting application material is submitted in English. Translations into English must be certified, with original documents available on request.
- 2.4 In exceptional circumstances group applications for RPCL may be considered. This may be the case where students at a particular FE College all apply using the same certificated learning.
- 2.5 Students can receive an exit award if they have RPL credit in their profile, providing their performance at the University also satisfies the award requirements of the Undergraduate or Postgraduate Degree Regulations. However, special consideration needs to be given to students who have been granted the full amount of RPL on their entry programme but fail the minimum number of credits for the programme and have to be considered to receive an exit award. Schools/Faculties will need to check that students have completed sufficient credits to leave the University with the relevant exit award; this means that at least half the taught credits of the exit award have been completed at the University (in line with the University's Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Degree Regulations).
- 2.6 If the student has not completed enough credits, they may only be eligible to receive a transcript of their results. The criteria against which RPL requests are judged are set out in Clause 1.5 so as to ensure that any student admitted is equipped and prepared to cope with the demands of their learning at Hope.
- 2.7 There are no fees charged for the consideration of RPL applications.
- 2.8 Applications for Advanced Standing from students who did not leave the University in good standing will not be automatically rejected, but a measured case needs to be made to the Faculty Executive Dean (or nominee) as to why

such a student should be readmitted, and the Dean's (or nominee's) decision in such a case will be ratified by the Chair of Academic Committee to ensure cross-faculty consistency and transparency (further guidance is found in Appendix 2 of this policy).

- 2.9 Students applying for Advanced Standing will be required to transfer all blocks of study that have previously been attempted and passed. Students will not normally be permitted to retake blocks of study already passed unless the subject team judge that they do not fulfil the requirements detailed in 1.5 of this policy. Students who have previously unsuccessfully attempted the Level of study to which they are applying to be re-admitted will only be granted one further attempt at that Level. This excludes previous attempts linked to interruption of studies. Any capping applied to the retake before the initial withdrawal from studies will be applied on re-entry.
- 2.10 Applications for RPL are considered on academic grounds and, as such, no formal rights of appeal exist against the final decision of the University, as appeals cannot be made against decisions of academic judgment. Appeals may, however, be made in line with the [University's Appeals and Complaints Procedure](#) on the grounds of procedural irregularity, the emergence of new material information or evidence of bias or prejudice.

3) The Application Process

Prospective Students requesting RPCL:

- 3.1 Applications for RPL, Advanced Standing and Credit Transfer should be made prior to entry and applications are not normally expected to be made on-course unless in exceptional circumstances. There is no deadline for applications prior to the start of the academic year, although all applicants are encouraged to apply as early as possible to allow sufficient time for the consideration of their request.
- 3.2 Applications for entry at undergraduate level should normally be made via UCAS. Other applications should consist of a written request, along with documentary evidence of the prior learning. This can be in the form of transcripts, certificates or other suitable evidence. There must be sufficient evidence such that the programme team can be confident in granting approval. Standard templates and forms are available to support applicants (further guidance and application forms can be found [here](#)).

Prospective Students requesting RPEL (experiential learning).

- 3.3 The applicant completes an [RPEL request form](#) and produces evidence for the request using a portfolio and an appropriate mapping document – advice can be given by the relevant programme lead (or nominee). The portfolio and mapping document should clearly demonstrate evidence of learning at the appropriate level.

- 3.4 The application is assessed by the Head of School (or nominee), who has not been directly involved in advising the applicant on the request. The HoS (or nominee) completes the appropriate documentation, returns it to Admissions team with the outcome of the RPEL request. The request form and recommendations are submitted admissions for processing.

Prospective Degree Apprentices

- 3.5 *The RPEL process will include apprenticeship applicants undertaking a self-assessment and an interview with the Programme Lead and/or Skills Coach, that will compare the individual's existing KSB's with those required in the relevant apprenticeship standard to achieve occupational competence. The finalised agreement on the amount of RPEL to be awarded must be endorsed by the apprentice employer. It will then result in an Individual Training Plan that accounts for relevant prior learning and experience, which may reduce the content, duration, and cost where training is not required.*
- 3.6 *Apprentice applicants can apply for all types of credit for prior learning at the time of application. The assessment will establish that the individual is eligible for the apprenticeship by meeting the minimum requirements for off-the-job training and duration, which are defined in the ESFA funding rules. It may identify that an Apprenticeship may not be appropriate for an individual because their level of prior learning and experience breaches the minimum requirements; therefore, a higher-level Apprenticeship or another type of training / course could be more appropriate for the individual. Applicants and their employers will be advised about this before an offer is made.*

4) Consideration of Applications

- 4.1 In all cases it is for the relevant Head of School, the Director of Apprenticeships (or their nominees), to authorise the award of RPCL/RPEL via any of the processes covered in this policy.
- 4.2 Consideration of the applications should include a detailed and documented discussion of how the Intended Learning Outcomes of each unit, where RPL is to be applied, have been met through prior learning or equivalent experience.

5) Timescales

- 5.1 The assessment of all requests for RPL must be completed in time to enrol the applicant on the correct level of the programme concerned, usually by the start of teaching.
- 5.2 *For Degree Apprenticeship programmes, the assessment of all types of prior learning and experience will be undertaken at the application stage (before an offer to be accepted onto a programme is made) because a*

successful application could lead to:

- *The reduction in weeks for training due to prior learning;*
- *The reduction in price, for training due to prior learning;*
- *Whether the applicant's prior learning is at a level that will preclude them from releasing funding from ESFA to study the programme;*
- *An increase in fee if the knowledge, skills, and behaviours achieved by the apprenticeship applicant are not sufficient and further assessment is required.*

6) Assessment of Applications

- 6.1 A decision regarding whether an application can be approved will depend on the requirements and specific learning outcomes of the particular programme as well as the details of the individual application.
- 6.2 If the School, Faculty assessor / Skills Coach decides that further evidence is required in addition to the applicant's initial submission, they should inform the applicant as soon as possible regarding the particular evidence required.
- 6.3 If the assessor/Skills Coach decides that they wish to see the applicant to ascertain additional information in support of the application, arrangements for an interview should be made as soon as possible.
- 6.4 When assessing the evidence against the requirements of the intended learning outcomes of the programme and particular course unit, the assessor / Skills Coach should consider the following:
 - Subject content and knowledge
 - Volume of learning
 - Level of learning
 - Evidence of achievement
 - Any particular restrictions imposed by Professional or Statutory Bodies, if applicable.
- 6.5 The assessor/Skills Coach should refer to the characteristics of the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) [qualification descriptors](#) to the level of work or course unit to assess whether it is acceptable.
- 6.6 The University reserves the right to terminate an application for study if the applicant is found to have omitted relevant facts or information in connection with their application or who has falsified or plagiarised any part of their application.
- 6.7 Exceptionally, individual applications may be received where the level RPL sought falls outside the norms established by this policy. Such applications, together with the supporting evidence, should be submitted using the standard templates. These should then be considered on a case-by-case

basis. Initial consideration of such requests will be by the Head of School/Director of Apprenticeships.

- 6.8 *For Degree Apprenticeships, the process requires the Apprentice applicant to undertake a self-assessment of their competence which will be discussed in a skills scan meeting and the level of competency assessed by the Liverpool Hope University Skills Coach, and then confirmed by the apprentice employer. The Skills Coach will advise the relevant Programme Lead, Business Development Manager and/or the Director of Apprenticeships regarding the amount of RPEL to be awarded. The process will be internally moderated by the Apprenticeship Hub and Quality Assured by the Apprenticeships Quality and Compliance Manager.*

7) Outcome of Applications

- 7.1 A successful application under the remit of this policy does not guarantee an offer of a place on a programme. Meeting entry criteria does not guarantee an offer and admissions tutors choose from a pool of eligible applicants in any given year.
- 7.2 Decisions about RPL applications should be relayed to the School /Programme Administrator and applicants should be informed of the decision and the normal processes for an application to study should be followed.
- 7.3 Records of decisions relating to applications should be maintained by the relevant Faculty/School/Apprenticeship Hub (and details of numbers of applications received, granted and refused, etc. retained for information).
- 7.4 Monitoring should take place, normally at School level and within Student Enrolment and Administration, to ensure that the criteria for RPL remain objective and are being fairly and consistently applied.
- 7.5 It is important that the progress of students admitted with RPL is monitored, so that information is built up on the suitability of particular qualifications for the granting of credit exemption. This should be covered in School Annual Reviews of programmes or via a separate report.
- 7.6 Student Enrolment and Administration should record successful applications as a credit on the student's record on the Student Information System (SITs). Unsuccessful applicants should be advised of the reasons for the decision and, where appropriate, given an indication of any further evidence which might be required to come to a final decision.
- 7.7 *In addition, for Degree Apprenticeships, any RPEL will be recorded using the designated Apprenticeship portal including the Learner record, the apprenticeship agreement and the training plan.*

8) Awarded Credit

- 8.1 Any credit awarded through this policy is treated in the same way as credit awarded through the normal taught route. Credits brought in from an external provider do not contribute to the calculation of the final award. The credits are represented as 'Prior Learning' on the student's academic transcript but marks and grades are not included in the final award calculation. However, for transfer of internally awarded credit via Advanced Standing and Credit transfer both the credit value and the marks/grades awarded will be considered when calculating the students final award.
- 8.2 Particular consideration will need to be given to the case of students who have been granted the full amount of RPL on their entry programme but fail the minimum number of Liverpool Hope credits for the award and are consequently considered for an exit award.

9) Entry

- 9.1 Students entering directly into Level 5 or Level 6 of an Undergraduate degree or partway through a Postgraduate degree, will not have had the induction that students normally receive at the beginning of their studies. The University has established a process by which all students entering at Level 5 or 6 of an Undergraduate degree, or partway through a PGT degree, are invited to a specially designed full induction session with the Gateway team, which covers all the information normally given in the Level 4 sessions and more.
- 9.2 Each Faculty/School receiving a student with RPL must further ensure that the student receives all appropriate advice relating to subject-specific matters. In particular, Schools should consider carefully whether there are any health and safety implications of allowing students to be exempted from particular units/modules on the basis of RPL. The decision on whether evidence of previous knowledge/experience satisfies School safety requirements should be made by the Programme Lead and relevant Health and Safety Officer.
- 9.3 *For Degree Apprenticeships, induction will be covered for all apprentices regardless of the award of RPEL to meet the requirements of ESFA.*

10) Exemptions from elements of programmes for students registered at Liverpool Hope

- 10.1 Students registered on a programme of study at Liverpool Hope may, with the permission of the Head of School and subject to the arrangements for student exchange, be exempted from part of their approved programme of study and be permitted to study abroad or at another university provided that:

- the courses proposed to be taken are relevant and that their outcomes coincide with those of the Liverpool Hope programme and are of at least equivalent credit value and level
- that the requirements for minimum amounts of credit to be undertaken at Liverpool Hope are satisfied
- that the requirement for 50% of the assessment for the award to be conducted by Liverpool Hope is satisfied and that the marks achieved whilst undertaking an exchange are imported for the purposes of the award and formally ratified by the relevant Progression and Award Board.

10.2 Such exemptions should normally be granted in the second year of an undergraduate programme provided that any prerequisites for the programme are satisfied. The approval of the exam board is also required for study abroad for part of the second year where marks from assessments contribute to the classification.

APPENDIX 1 - Additional Guidance

I. Visiting Students

Applications from Visiting Students who request transfer to a Liverpool Hope University programme of study following completion of, or during their visiting placement may be considered through the RPL process. In such cases, previous study at their original home institution (based on an academic transcript) and/or other evidence, as well as study undertaken as a visiting student at Hope, may be taken into account in making the RPL assessment. Note: the assessment regime for visiting students may vary from those of full- time Liverpool Hope students. Any variation approved for a particular student while under the visiting student regime must be considered when assessing work undertaken at Hope as part of the RPL application

II. Double Counting

RPL can be granted for all learning from other educational institutions, even if that learning has already resulted in the award of a qualification similar to, or the same as, the qualification which the student is seeking to be awarded by the University. Similarly, the University places no restrictions on other institutions awarding qualifications on the basis of credits or qualifications gained at Liverpool Hope.

RPL from a Liverpool Hope qualification may however, not be used to count towards a second Liverpool Hope qualification which is both at the same level and in a similar subject to the first: e.g. a student who has left with a BA Honours in Music (as an example) would not be able to count RPL from this course towards a second BA Honours in Ancient Music.

III. Articulation agreements

Articulation describes a formal relationship between two linked programmes, provided by two institutions. The successful completion of a named programme (or part of a programme) in one institution is recognised as providing the basis for entry with advanced standing to a named programme in the second institution (i.e. one awarding institution recognises the credit awarded by another). Articulation agreements are dealt with under the procedures for collaborative provision and are recorded in the Register of Collaborative Provision. They sit outside this policy.