

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

1. Accredited Prior (Certificated) Learning

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) can allow students to use their learning from outside of the University of Essex Online to be awarded credit that contributes to their University of Essex Online programme. Applicants for RPL provide evidence that their previous learning is relevant, current and satisfies the learning outcomes for their chosen programme. If the application is successful, the credit can count towards their University of Essex award, up to the limits specified in this policy.

This policy draws on sector-recognised standards and on the QAA guidance '[Higher Education Credit Framework for England: Advice on Academic Credit Arrangements](#) and the [Making Use of Credit: A Companion to the Higher Education Credit Framework for England](#) (Published in May 2021) and uses the definitions from this guidance where possible. These documents provide useful additional information about credit frameworks and how they can be applied across a range of higher education provision.

2. Scope of the Policy

Recognition of prior learning occurs where previous study or other forms of learning is recognised. This could include:

- Credit undertaken at another provider is taken into consideration to allow a student to join level 5 or 6 of an honours degree.
- A student uses an existing University of Essex award towards another award ('re-use of credit).
- Prior learning (for example through professional experience) is assigned a credit value to allow the student not to take specific modules that would normally be included on their course. This is particularly important for students on degree apprenticeship courses, as their training plan should ensure that they do not duplicate knowledge, skills and behaviours they already have within their apprenticeship programme;

This is distinct from the entry requirements, for instance where a foundation degree is used to apply for a one-year level 6 award, which is not covered by this policy.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the [University of Essex Recognition of Prior Learning and Re-Use of Credit Policy](#).

3. Applications

Applications for RPL can take place either before a student joins a University of Essex Online programme or during the course of their study. Where the learning took place before the student applied to a University of Essex Online programme, the application for RPL should be made before the student is enrolled onto the programme into which they are seeking to transfer prior learning.

Applications for RPL can be made during a course where required but cannot be used to replace a module in which a student has enrolled and been unsuccessful.

Applications for RPL should be discussed in the first instance with the student's Admission Adviser. Where the application is being made by an enrolled student for their current programme it should be discussed with the Student Support Team.

Applicants seeking consideration of prior learning must provide documentary evidence of the learning that they wish to be considered; this may be in the form of transcripts, certificates and the learning outcomes relating to their previous course.

A decision as to whether APCL can be approved will depend both on the specific requirements and learning outcomes of each programme and the details of each individual application.

Applicants should note that the award of specific credit via APCL towards their intended course of study at the University may not necessarily directly reflect the value/level of the credit assigned to their current/previous qualification (i.e. it may be less).

Exemptions will only be considered for full years or individual modules of study; not elements therein.

Exemptions will not be considered for prerequisites in certain disciplines where professional and statutory regulating body requirements apply.

Where students transfer to a different programme, any existing approved RPL will be re-assessed and a decision made as to whether RPL is possible for the new programme. Options and the requirements of the award will be confirmed at the time a programme change request is received or by the Board of Examiners.

4. Assessment and Approval of Applications

Applications for RPL will be considered in accordance with the APCL Framework that has been agreed with the University of Essex. Where exemption from taught programmes is sought, consideration should be given to the following:

- Subject content and knowledge.
- Volume of Learning
- Level of Learning
- Evidence of Achievement
- Currency of prior learning. Normally learning should have been completed within the five years prior to the enrolment date for the intended programme of study. Where this is not the case and an exemption is sought, evidence of how the student has kept their learning current should form part of the application.

5 Examples:

A student who achieves a Graduate Certificate, or a Graduate Diploma, may apply to use the credit towards any Postgraduate or Masters award because they are all at a higher level and the Certificate and Diploma are not terminal awards.

A student who has gained an Honours Degree may not use credit forming part of the award towards any further awards at any level.

6. RE-Use of Credit (including from staged awards)

Credit awarded by either the University of Essex or an external institution can be used as the basis for an application for RPL, in accordance with the limits set out in section 3. The credits can be used for an application for a new qualification at a higher, equivalent or lower level. Credit can be re-used more than once, as long as other criteria are met.

Where a University of Essex student, including those studying at Partner Institutions, successfully satisfies the requirements for a staged University of Essex award (see definitions) then this can be re-used to form the basis of an application for RPL towards:

- The next staged award, for example, 120 credits from a Postgraduate Diploma (maximum) could be used towards a Masters award, or 60 credits from a Postgraduate Certificate (maximum) could be used towards a Postgraduate Diploma.
- Converting a conferred University of Essex Ordinary degree to a Degree with Honours. Students must count all relevant credit contained in the Ordinary degree towards the requirements of the named degree with Honours. For each new award applied for, a minimum of 60 credits of unique study at level 6 is required and can only be used once.

Where a student re-uses credit from a staged award in this way, it should be considered that they are being admitted to a new course, using RPL credit: the maximum period of study should therefore be considered to apply to the new course without reference to the prior study completed.

If a student was unable to complete the original target award that they applied for (such as a Bachelors degree) and was granted an 'exit award' (such as a Diploma of Higher Education) and wished to re-use credit in this way, they would need to be considered under the Readmissions Policy.

7. Calculation of degree results

In calculating the final taught degree result of a student who makes a successful RPL application, any courses or modules from which the student is exempted on the basis of RPL will be excluded from calculated averages or other methods used to determine the student's final degree result unless the

application consists of re-use of University of Essex validated credit. This does not apply to postgraduate research provision where the work recognised via RPL would form part of the final output.

The transcript for a student who makes a successful APCL application will indicate the elements of the course from which the student was exempted.

8. Summary of requirements for admission via APCL:

Award	Maximum credits which may be imported	Minimum credits to be taken on University of Essex Online courses	Level(s) at which credits can be imported	Total credits for award*
Masters Degree	90	90 (NQF Level 7)	7	180
Postgraduate Diploma	60	60 (NQF Level 7)	7	120
Graduate Diploma	60	60 (NQF Level 6)	6 and below	120
Postgraduate Certificate	30	30 (NQF Level 7)	7	60
Graduate Certificate	30	30 (NQF Level 6)	6 and below	60
Honours Degree	240	120 (NQF Level 6)	4 and 5	360
Ordinary Degree	200	100 (with a minimum of 60 at NQF Level 6)		300
Foundation Degree	120	120 (NQF Level 5)	4	240
Diploma of HE	120	120 (NQF Level 5)	4	240
Certificate of HE	60	60 (NQF Level 4)	4	120

Responsible Manager	Title	Date Approved	Related Policies
David Dixon	Academic Director	January 2025	Admissions Policy
Carol Dadd	Director of Quality and Compliance		Re-admissions Policy
			<u>Rules of Assessment</u>