

## POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR THE RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING AT SWANSEA UNIVERSITY

### 1. INTRODUCTION

For the purpose of this document, the Recognition of Prior Learning, signifies the process by which this University (and many others) gives recognition to learning achieved by an individual before entry to a programme of study at Swansea.

At Swansea, the term covers the following:

- a) **Credit Transfer** - Where the credits or qualification have been awarded by a UK higher education institution as part of a formal qualification or by a non-UK institution as part of an equivalent qualification;
- b) **Recognition of Prior certificated Learning (RPcL)** - prior learning (such as professional development awards or employment-based awards) which is at higher education level but which has not led to the award of HE credits or a qualification;
- c) **Recognition of Prior experiential Learning (RPeL)** – where learning gained through experience is assessed and recognised.

### 2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Whether a Recognition of Prior Learning claim is based on credit transfer, prior certificated learning or prior experiential learning, it is important to realise that it is the achievement of learning, or the outcomes of that learning, being recognised rather than the activity of learning itself.

It is the responsibility of a receiving institution, i.e. Swansea University, to decide how much specific credit to award an individual student via a Recognition of Prior Learning, based on the level, extent and perceived relevance of the material (both knowledge- and skills-based) contained within the programme/qualification offered by the applicant when compared with his/her intended programme of study at Swansea University.

Applications for Recognition of Prior Learning should normally be made during the application stage – and prior to the student enrolling on the programme.

Recognition of Prior Learning can be made only for a complete module, and not part of a module.

For undergraduate Honours degree programmes and Advanced Initial degrees, the maximum number of credits which may be accepted to count towards an initial degree shall be:

- \* not more than 240 i.e. candidates must normally pursue at least 120 credits in Swansea. Where the maximum transferable credit has been accepted, the remaining credits to be pursued must be at Level 6 or above, or
- \* a maximum of 120 credits via "experiential" or "certificated" (e.g. professional qualifications) learning

Postgraduate taught students may claim Recognition of Prior Learning for a maximum of one third of the total number of credit points for an award. Recognition of Prior Learning shall not be granted in respect of the dissertation component or directed independent learning or approved equivalent (i.e. internship/placement modules) of a programme.

However, the following exceptions apply and students may claim Recognition of Prior Learning for the following programmes:

- Legal Practice, PG Dip – 90 credits out of 180
- Graduate Diploma in Law – 60 credits out of 120
- Pre-registration Nursing degrees – 180 out of 360
- Pre-registration Occupational Therapy – 120 out of 360
- **APL is not permitted for pre-registration midwifery.**
- Post Registration qualifications in Health Science – 240 out of 360
- Plus an additional 40 credits in year 3

Candidates may wish to consider the financial implications associated with RPL. Claiming RPL may impact on a candidate's eligibility for a postgraduate loan and candidates are advised to seek advice from their funding council prior to making a RPL claim.

Exceptions to the above will be approved on a case-by-case basis by the Matriculation Sub- Committee.

### 3. CREDIT TRANSFER

Specific credit may be awarded for programmes which form part of a degree/higher education qualification, that carry a credit rating and are clearly comparable in level, academic standard, content and learning outcomes to an equivalent award at Swansea University.

There must be an appropriate match in both level and content between the applicant's previous studies and modules for which they are seeking exemption, especially in relation to core/compulsory modules. The Admissions Tutor must ensure that the learning derived from these previous studies is equivalent to the learning that might otherwise have been achieved by following the full programme of study at Swansea. However, it is also possible to match optional modules within the Swansea University programme where the level is equivalent but the content does not match.

Applicants must note, however, that exemption from credits on their intended programme of study at Swansea University is not guaranteed and may not necessarily directly reflect the value/level of the general credit assigned to their current/previous qualification by the validating body, i.e. it may be less.

Exemption is not normally awarded for programmes/qualifications that were awarded five years or more prior to the enrolment date for the intended programme of study. It would be considered exceptionally where the applicant can provide supporting evidence which gives an account of ways in which learning achieved through the programme/qualification has been applied actively and updated within the past five years.

Exemption may not normally be granted where a student has previously registered for and failed part of an award and wishes to seek readmission to the same or a similar award.

Requests for exemption will be considered from students who had previously studied at Swansea and exited with an Undergraduate or Postgraduate Certificate or Diploma and who request to return to complete the degree, but not from those who had gained an exit award on the basis of academic failure.

Credits which have contributed to a full award will be accepted if the previous award is forfeited and the certificate returned to the awarding institution (wherever possible).

### **3.1 Application process**

Applicants who are unsure whether or not their previous studies are a close enough match to the Swansea University qualification towards which they are claiming credit are encouraged to contact the relevant programme Admissions Tutor for an informal discussion prior to submitting an application for Credit Transfer.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to submit evidence in support of their claim for Credit Transfer. Supporting evidence is likely to include an academic transcript and programme syllabus, but the relevant Admissions Tutor will advise the applicant of the specific documentation required.

#### **a. Undergraduate applications for “Direct Entry” to year 2 (or year 3)**

Undergraduate applicants wishing to apply for direct entry to year 2 of a programme should indicate their desired year of entry in the ‘point of entry’ section of the UCAS/Apply application form and send supporting evidence to the Admissions Office.

If an applicant requests direct entry to year 2 or 3 on their application form, the Admissions Office will make an initial assessment of the form as usual and will highlight the point of entry information for the attention of the Admissions Tutor. If there is insufficient supporting evidence of the applicant’s previous study, the Admissions Office should inform the Admissions Tutor of this and the applicant should be asked to provide additional evidence.

It is the responsibility of the Admissions Tutor for the programme to assess and approve direct entry applications to year 2 of the programme (or year 3 of a 4 year Advanced Initial degree programme). In exceptional circumstances an application for direct entry to the final year of an undergraduate degree programme can be considered, subject to the approval of the Admissions Tutor and the Matriculation Sub-Committee.

Direct entry is appropriate only for those seeking exemption at the point of application from a whole year/level of an undergraduate programme.

## **b. Applications for Credit Transfer of individual modules**

Applicants should complete the standard application form for the programme (e.g. UCAS, Apply etc.) **and** the Recognition of Prior Learning: Credit Transfer form; enclosing relevant supporting evidence (usually a formal transcript and syllabus).

Applications for Credit Transfer may take up to 6 weeks to complete and the Admissions Office will notify the applicant of the outcome in writing.

## **3.2 Degree Classification**

The marks of transferred credits from another UK Higher Education Institution will not be used to calculate award. The award will be classified using the credits pursued at Swansea University.

## **4. RECOGNITION OF PRIOR CERTIFICATED/EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**

RPcL/RPeL exemptions for programmes which are subject to professional statutory or regulatory requirements will have specific requirements. Applicants should consult the relevant Admissions Tutor for further advice.

### **4.1 Application Process**

Applicants who wish to make a RPcL/RPeL application are encouraged to contact the relevant programme Admissions Tutor for an informal discussion prior to submitting an application.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to submit evidence in support of their claim for Recognition of Prior Learning.

RPcL/RPeL applications will be assessed individually. Applicants must demonstrate that relevant learning experience has been gained. This could be via one or more of the following, as determined by the relevant Admissions Tutor:

- a. undertaking one or more approved assessments for each module (this could be standard assessments or supplementary examinations; or specifically designed and approved assessments etc.); or
- b. submitting a portfolio of evidence to demonstrate that they have met the learning outcomes of the module(s) and the applicant's personal reflection of how the experience has furthered his/her understanding of the relevant subject area: this may include confirmation from line managers of the job description/ responsibilities and applicant's abilities.

The College will make an initial assessment to determine if the applicant has sufficient relevant experience to complete a portfolio.

The College will ensure that RPcL/RPeL applicants who are allowed to produce a portfolio receive adequate guidance about what is required before starting work (structure, word length etc.) They will support the applicant (within specified boundaries) with the production of their portfolio.

The College will notify RPcL/RPeL applicants and Admissions of any additional assessment tools to be used when assessing RPcL/RPeL claims (e.g. interviews, diagnostic tests, special assignments).

The College will ensure that applicants are fully aware of the demands of a RPcL/RPeL claim prior to application and that they understand that completion of a portfolio does not guarantee that exemption will be granted.

On submission of the portfolio the College will determine if the evidence provided demonstrates that an applicant has met learning outcomes of the Swansea modules for which exemption is sought and make a RPcL/RPeL recommendation to the Matriculation Sub-Committee.

RPcL/RPeL applications may take up to 10 weeks to complete.

## **4.2 Fees and charges**

An administrative charge will be made for RPcL/RPeL applications on a per module basis – of 10% of the module fee, whether or not the application is successful.

## **4.3 Degree Classification**

RPcL/RPeL credits would normally be assigned a pass/fail grade rather than a mark.

Only the marks from modules studied at Swansea will be used to calculate the degree classification, and not the RPcL/RPeL credits.

Where an entire undergraduate year had been Recognised the following statement would appear on the transcript: "Credit exemption from the early stage of the programme of study has been granted, based on study elsewhere, a previous qualification or relevant work experience."

For any Recognition of individual credits (less than an entire year of study) the number of Credits would appear on the transcript.

## **5. TUITION FEES**

It is current University policy to reduce a student's tuition fees by the cost of any modules exempted via a Recognition of Prior Learning (however, see 4.2 above for charges for RPcL/RPeL applications). The University reserves the right to review this policy at any time. If an applicant's Recognition of Prior Learning claim is successful their tuition fees will be reduced by the cost of any exempted modules.

However, if the applicant is awaiting the outcome of a Recognition of Prior Learning claim at the point of enrolment, they are required to pay the full tuition fee on time. If they are subsequently awarded credit towards a degree they will receive a refund for the cost of any exempted modules.

Academic Services (Student Finance) will calculate any reduction in tuition fees after a decision letter has been sent to the applicant by the Admissions Office and their student record will be adjusted accordingly.

## **6. APPEALS**

The University will not review a Recognition of Prior Learning decision where the grounds for requesting a review are simply that the applicant disagrees with the academic judgement that has been applied, and where there is no evidence that the correct procedures have not been followed. The University shall not be obliged to consider an appeal simply on the grounds that the applicant is unwilling to accept the original decision not to grant credit, and seeks to overturn that decision.

Applicants whose claims for Recognition of Prior Learning are unsuccessful may request a review of the decision only on the basis of additional evidence that was unavailable at the time of the application or if there is evidence that the correct procedures have not been followed. For example, if the applicant subsequently obtains additional documentation pertaining to their prior certificated study which supports their claim. A request for a formal review of the decision should be made in writing and addressed to the Admissions Office.

**Further guidance can be found at in Chapter B6 of the QAA Quality Code for Higher Education**