

CREDIT USE AND TRANSFER INCLUDING RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING POLICY

Use of academic credit

Edge Hill University subscribes to the nationally-agreed system for the award of academic credit as defined within the *'Higher education credit framework for England: guidance on academic credit arrangements in higher education in England'* (2008)¹. Credit is a means of quantifying and recognising learning, whenever and wherever it is achieved, and is awarded on the successful demonstration of validated learning outcomes as measured through assessment. The amount of credit awarded is based on the number of Notional Learning Hours studied, either through scheduled learning activities (such as lectures and seminars), guided independent study or placement/ study abroad activity where 1 credit equates to 10 Notional Learning Hours. Credit awarded for individual modules may be accumulated towards full qualification awards such as an undergraduate Honours or Masters degree and is reflected in a student's transcript on completion of their studies. Credit for an undergraduate degree is awarded at different levels reflecting the relative depth of learning involved and split equally between levels 4, 5 and 6 which normally equate to the first, second and third years of full-time study. Module and programme credit values are determined at the point of academic approval (validation) where an undergraduate honours degree comprises 360 credits based on a standard module size of 20 credits (equating to 200 Notional Learning Hours). Credit may be either graded or ungraded depending on how it is used. This document deals with the use and re-use of credit at Edge Hill, and credit transfer including Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Use and re-use of credit

Programme validation ensures that there is clear correlation between the modules and learning outcomes of a programme and the named qualification award that students will achieve. In an Edge Hill undergraduate degree consisting of 360 credits, learners may exit prematurely and use the credit achieved by that stage towards an interim qualification award, e.g. Certificate of Education for 120 level 4 credits; Diploma of Higher Education for an additional 120 level 5 credits; or Ordinary (non-Honours) degree for an additional 60 level 6 credits. In a 180 credit Masters degree, early exit with 60 level 7 credits enables the award of a postgraduate certificate, and for an additional 60 level 7 credits the award of postgraduate diploma. The availability of exit awards, their titles and any required module combinations are determined at validation.

The development of multiple named awards from a common core of modules has grown significantly at Edge Hill over recent years. In order to maintain the academic integrity of individual award titles, at least one third of the credit achieved from combined levels 5 and 6 of an undergraduate degree is normally² award-specific.

Credit towards a new qualification at the same level may only be re-used up to one third of the total required.

Credit has a shelf-life in terms of its continued relevance and may only be re-used where it is deemed to remain relevant to the award being sought. This is a matter of academic judgement to be taken by individual departments (subject or admissions tutors).

¹ <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Academic-Credit-Framework.pdf>.

² See Academic Regulations C4.1.

Credit transfer and the Recognition of Prior Learning

Edge Hill recognises that learning may take place in a wide variety of settings including conventional taught courses; online learning; learning outside courses; professional and employment experience; personal and leisure experience; self-directed study, etc. University policy on the **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)** facilitates the formal recognition of learning gained elsewhere and where appropriate, provides for credit to be attached to that learning. The RPL process is a means of building on the existing strengths of individuals, encouraging a sense of life-long learning. Within a credit-based system, RPL provides greater flexibility in admitting students to award-bearing courses and links prior learning experiences to current programmes of study so that the student gains maximum benefit. As such, the RPL policy supports the University's aim of promoting and supporting the personal development, knowledge, skills and employability of its students. Credit can be used to enable students to transfer to another programme, either within the same institution or another, according to its regulations, and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) which is compatible with the UK's credit system³ supports credit transfer between higher education institutions operating within the European Higher Education Area.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a general term used to describe the process by which students have learning that has already been undertaken recognised by the University, either for entry purposes, for individual entry with advanced standing (at a later stage of a programme) or in substitution for a specific module/s.

Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL) relates specifically to learning that has been previously assessed for a validated qualification awarded by a higher education institution, professional body or other recognised education or training provider. Credit derived from qualifications awarded by another provider is considered *general credit* unless a clear match can be established to an Edge Hill module/ programme's learning outcomes, in which case it becomes *specific credit*. The particular learning requirements of an award may mean that general credit is not appropriate for credit transfer into the institution - however, it is not always necessary to show an exact match in terms of learning content as it is the *learning outcomes* that are most important for RPL credit to be awarded. So for example, it may be perfectly possible to award RPL credit to a student who has successfully studied 19th century European history against a 20th century European history module provided the learning outcomes for the Edge Hill module and programme have been achieved.

Learning undertaken outside formal educational settings, for example in the community or from work-based learning from which specific skills or knowledge have been gained, can be formally recognised through the process of **Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)**. Learning acquired in this way is reviewed and assessed, and an appropriate credit value (level and number of credits) assigned to it.

³ Where 2 UK credits equate to 1 ECTS credit at the same level.

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The principles described in this policy apply to RPL at whatever point it is brought forward by an applicant/ student of Edge Hill University.

General principles

The student makes the claim:

It is the responsibility of the student to make a claim for RPL and to support the claim with appropriate evidence. The University can offer guidance in relation to process but prime responsibility rests with the student.

Learning based on experience:

Where a claim is based on experiential learning, it is the evidence of the learning achieved from the experience that is being identified, assessed and accredited. The intellectual task of moving from a description of experience to an identification of the learning derived from that experience is crucial.

Independent assessment:

There is a clear separation between the identification of prior learning and organising it into forms fit for presentation for assessment, and the assessment process itself. Students may receive advice and guidance in the formative process of identifying prior learning but the assessment of claims must be independent from the support process.

Responsibility for assessment:

Assessment is the responsibility of the teaching staff attached to the relevant degree scheme or award-bearing course at Edge Hill. In making their assessment, teaching staff will consider the following criteria.

- **Authenticity and sufficiency**
The assessor will need to be certain that the learning has been undertaken by the applicant and has been fully achieved.
- **Relevance/Equivalence**
The assessor will need to be convinced that the evidence produced relates sufficiently well to the module or programme learning outcomes against which the claim is being made.
- **Quality**
The assessor will assess whether the structure, process and outcomes of the learning experience are of comparable quality with other accredited learning experiences, including attention to academic level.
- **Currency**
The evidence of achievement will be assessed to establish its currency. Evidence of further development or updating is normally required if certificated learning is more than five years old.

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The nature of assessment:

The method of assessment will be appropriate for the evidence that is being assessed, hence staff may choose to use: written evidence; the presentation of portfolios; oral testing or presentation; observation of performance etc. Claims based on experiential learning will normally require the submission of a portfolio.

Quality assurance:

Decisions regarding RPL are a matter of academic judgement. The decision-making process will be documented and evidence relating to any claim will be made available for consideration by the external examiner (where appropriate) to further ensure that academic standards are being maintained.

RPL as a proportion of a degree or award:

Normally, the maximum credit for prior learning that can be counted towards a programme award is 66% (two thirds) for Honours and Masters degree programmes and 50% for all other awards, including Top-Up degrees. For specific regulations, see section C7 of the Academic Regulations.

Minimum claim for RPL:

The smallest amount of learning that can be accredited through RPL on any taught programme is a single module irrespective of credit value.

National framework for credit accumulation:

Edge Hill will take full account of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (QAA)⁴ and any agreements and practice within the higher education sector and in related professional accrediting bodies. The University will recognise credit awarded by accredited UK HE providers subject to application of this policy.

Grading for RPL:

RPL credit is not generally graded unless the learning has been undertaken and assessed as part of a validated module/ programme at Edge Hill University.

Fairness and equity:

The RPL processes adopted by the University will be rigorous; fair to applicants; reflect the University's Equal Opportunities Policy; and ensure that the student's programme of study builds upon their prior learning in a coherent way.

The University reserves the right to make a charge in relation to the assessment of RPL. Any such charge will be clearly identified to applicants in advance of their submission.

⁴ <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code>.

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Operation

General:

The assessment of RPL is carried out by subject tutors in Faculties. It is the responsibility of each Faculty to produce an RPL Protocol for the assessment of claims. In drawing up or revising the Protocol, Faculties will consult with the Dean of Teaching and Learning Development, Academic Registry and Admissions. The Protocols and their operation will be approved, monitored and reviewed by Faculties.

The Faculty Protocol should address Expectation B6 of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (QAA) and the principles outlined in this policy and included in validation documents with an indication of any special arrangements for that particular programme. The Protocol will cover the following:

- a) The extent to which RPL is applied, including its use for:
 - i) initial admission to the degree/award-bearing course;
 - ii) advanced entry to an award bearing programme;
 - iii) the recognition of RPL credit within an award.
- b) The preparation and checking of publicity and marketing materials to ensure potential applicants are aware of RPL.
- c) The specific procedures that applicants should follow in making a claim for RPL at the various stages identified in a) above.
- d) The forms of advice, guidance and support available for RPL applicants.
- e) The procedures that will be followed in assessing and confirming a claim for RPL. This will include the clear identification of the persons/sub-committee responsible for these procedures.
- f) Details of the operational arrangements for any Faculty RPL Panel(s).
- g) If it is a classified award, the extent to which grades/ marks from other higher education institutions can be incorporated in the Edge Hill award having regard to the University's Academic Regulations.
- h) Any fees to be paid by the applicant in connection with the RPL claim.

Specific:

a) Admission to programmes of study

Where an applicant wishes to use RPL as alternative or supplementary evidence of academic suitability for entry to a programme, the normal admissions process will apply. Admissions tutors will follow the principles outlined above in determining whether or not an offer of a place can be made. Applicants may be asked to attend for interview and may be required to complete additional pieces of work as part of the assessment process. Applications for individual advanced entry (for example where a student has completed the first year of a programme at another University) are also handled through the admissions process but outcomes will be reported to the appropriate Progression or

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Award Board and may be subject to scrutiny by external examiners where the entry level is above level 4.

b) Articulation/ credit exemption

Articulation with credit exemption is a specific form of admission where the University has already undertaken a mapping exercise to determine the equivalency of another provider's programme which enables any qualification holder to enter an Edge Hill programme with advanced standing, i.e. at a later stage than its normal start. Applicants for advanced entry to programmes supported by articulation agreements are not required to make individual RPL submissions.

c) Course Transfers

Students who wish to transfer their programme of study whilst at the University will be assessed for admission in relation to the receiving programme and RPL credit previously awarded will be re-assessed.

d) RPL credit within programmes

Students seeking RPL credit for individual modules once they have been accepted on to a programme apply using processes outlined in the Faculty Protocol document. Decisions will be reported to the appropriate Progression/ Award Board and may be subject to scrutiny by external examiners where the credit awarded is above level 4.

Complaints and Appeals

RPL decisions are matters of academic judgement. Students have a right to receive feedback on their submission and may use the complaints and appeals processes as appropriate in relation to the RPL process.