

ARDEN UNIVERSITY QUALITY ASSURANCE DOCUMENT QA 6 – RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING POLICY AND PROCEDURES

1. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the process through which a student may be given formal recognition for learning achieved prior to their admission to the programme for which they are applying. Where prior learning is used to inform an admission decision, it must do so in relation to fulfilling the entry criteria of the course. This policy must be applied in conjunction with Arden University Admission policies relevant to a specific programme.
2. Students may be admitted to the University with either accredited prior learning (RPCL) where they have previously successfully completed relevant study at higher education level, in the UK or abroad, or with (RPEL) accredited experiential learning based on relevant prior learning which has occurred outside a formal course of study, which may include in-company training or relevant work experience.

General Principles

3. RPL may be granted as credit in two ways:
 - a. Exemption – where a module or a level is recorded as exempt on the student record. No marks from previous learning are recorded.
 - b. Module mapping – where a module with the same title, academic level and credit value may be transferred to another course where the same module exists within the new programme. The final mark and attempts will be recorded on the student record.
4. To receive an Arden University award, a student must study at least one third of the total required credits for the award, except for Degree Apprenticeships which must study half (50%) of the award with the University. This means that credit previously achieved on conferred awards at lower levels to the award for which the student is applying, or on incomplete programmes, may be used for RPCL up to a maximum of two thirds of the credits required for the award, subject to any professional body requirements.
5. The minimum number of credits students must study and pass on their current course at Arden University are detailed below;

| Award | Maximum number of RPCL or RPEL Credits which may count towards Arden University award | Minimum number of credits required from Arden University award |
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| Bachelor's Degree (including Joint Honours & Single Honours) | 240 credits | 120 credits at level 6 including dissertation/project |
| Bachelor's Degree Top-up (120 credits) | All credits must be studied and passed, no RPL permitted | |
| Certificate of Higher Education | 80 credits | 40 credits at level 4 |
| Diploma of Higher Education | 160 credits | 80 credits at level 5 |
| Master's Degree | 100 credits | 80 credits at level 7 including dissertation/project |
| Master's Degree Top-up | All credits must be studied and passed, no RPL permitted | |
| Postgraduate Certificate | 40 credits | 20 credits at level 7 |
| Postgraduate Diploma | 80 credits | 40 credits at level 7 |
| University statements of credit | All credits must be studied and passed, no RPL permitted | |

6. RPL will not be granted for Arden University Level 6 modules.
7. RPL may not be permitted against modules and courses which have PSRB requirements that do not permit RPL on accredited courses.
8. The Applicant and Student record will reflect where exemptions have been applied and identify the specific modules exempt. The Arden University academic transcripts will indicate if an award which has been conferred includes exempt modules and will list modules against which the exemptions have been applied.
9. Students who seek admission to a programme with RPCL or RPEL are not permitted to register onto the course until such exemptions have been approved in writing.
10. Apprentices who seek admission to a programme with RPCL or RPEL (exemptions against the appropriate Apprenticeship standard Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs), are not permitted to register onto the apprenticeship until such exemptions have been approved in writing and funding adjustments agreed.
11. Requests for RCPL or RPEL will not normally be considered following admission, if a student subsequently discovers that they may have met the

learning outcomes of modules, they may apply for RPCL or RPEL of those modules, provided that they have not previously been awarded credit exemptions for the prior learning being used for the new RPL claim. These late claims may only be made for individual modules, not to entire levels of programmes, and may not be made during the first 60 credits of study with Arden University.

12. Any marks or grades associated with RPCL which has been approved as exemptions on a student record will not be individually recorded and are excluded from the final classification calculations of an Arden University award.
13. Modules which have been awarded a compensated pass may not be accepted for RPCL against an equivalent module where there are PSRB requirements which do not permit this.
14. Registration periods for students admitted with RPL will be calculated pro rata.
15. The currency of learning will be considered when applying for RPL. For example, qualifications older than five years, will require further evidence that knowledge has been kept up to date through Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and/or Learning. Currency is dependent on the subject, to be determined by academic staff in liaison with applicant as to whether proposed learning is within acceptable timeframes (refer to paragraph 21 for additional information).

Credit awarded by Arden University

16. Subject to this policy, any student who has successfully completed modules when registered for an Arden University Award and who then applies for a transfer to a different course may, subject to any restrictions within the Programme Specification, request to receive RCPL for the credits achieved before transfer.
17. A student may apply to transfer between courses within the University and collaborative partners. However, where a transfer is approved, a student may not exceed the maximum number of attempts permitted where modules are equivalent.

Use of credits / double counting

18. Once credit has been used towards a qualification and an award given, then the credit cannot be used again towards another qualification of the same level unless the transfer of credit would result in a student building on or broadening their learning.

19. Modules passed on one course may not be taken again as part of a further course.
20. The same prior learning credits may not be reused or double counted towards more than one module or programme.

Process for consideration and approval of RPL claims – General

21. RPL decisions will be evaluated by an Admissions Tutor, who is able to provide the necessary support and guidance to facilitate students through the RPL process. In this capacity, the role of the Admissions Tutor includes:
 - a. Providing information and advice on all matters relating to RPL, to support Arden University Admissions and Recruitment Teams in communications with students.
 - b. Responsible for the final RPL decisions, determining which Arden University modules are required to be completed and confirmation of exempted or mapped modules.

RPCL claims

22. Recognition of Prior Certified Learning Application Form must be completed in respect of any RPCL claim.

Recruitment Advisors will be responsible for the completion of these templates and collating documentation. The admissions team will make an initial assessment of the suitability, however the final approval of the RPCL application must be provided by an Admissions Tutor. The RPCL form will list all modules exempted and indicate the rationale for the exemption, and the provenance of the credits utilised. All certification will be held on the University's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.

The following general principles are provided for guidance:

- a. Prior learning must be clearly shown to be current; sufficient in terms of credit volume (minimum of 50% of Arden module credit), authentic, relevant and valid;
- b. Currency normally requires that the prior learning is no more than 5 years, see paragraph 21;
- c. A student cannot receive exemptions in excess of the credits presented for RPCL; prior learning at Level 4 may, in some circumstances, be used to exempt against Arden Level 5. Level 5 modules may be used for exemption against similar level 4 Arden modules. However, total exemptions at Level 5 must not exceed the prior learning evidenced at that level. For example, a student with 200 credits at Level 4 and 20 credits at Level 5 could receive maximum RPL of 120 credits at Level 4 and 20 credits at Level 5.
- d. Where a student presents a completed relevant award, for example a

- HND, and requests exemption from complete stages of an Arden University programme, then provided that award meets the learning outcomes of the exempted level and the requirements of 20c above, it may be accepted in its entirety. Programme Team Leaders are responsible for providing guidance on this, for example listing essential modules. Where applicants lack up to 20 credits in one 'core' subject, applicants would be required to study that module not contained within their previous award;
- e. Where it is not possible to consider exemption from a full stage under (d) above, exemption from individual modules may be considered. It is acceptable to split the credits from a prior learning module against several Arden University modules (where credit value allows) and is also acceptable to use multiple prior learning modules to cover the learning outcomes on an Arden University module.
 - f. In the case of international awards, the documentation should reference NARIC to show the value of the award.
23. If the qualification / learning presented within an RPCL claim is beyond the five- year currency limit, applicants must provide evidence of more recent updating of their professional knowledge and practice. This evidence may comprise some or all the following to be defined on an individual basis by the Admissions Tutor:
- a. Evidence of successful completion of relevant CPD learning, if applicable;
 - b. Reflective statement: detailing how knowledge and practice has remained up to date;
 - c. CV: to cover employment history, focussing on how the applicant has maintained their knowledge and practice since qualifying with the award(s) for which they are seeking credit;
 - d. Any claim to be supported by employment history, an employer reference(s): on organisational headed paper, Arden University reference form or, exceptionally, an email directly from the employer, confirming that the applicant's job title, responsibilities of the role and CPD has enabled them to keep up to date with information and current practices in the subject area in which the applicant is intending to claim in order to be awarded RPCL.
24. A register of recognised RPL conventions such as credit comparisons and international GPA equivalencies, both for UK and overseas awards, will be held by the Admissions Office.

RPCL claims

25. RPCL is the process through which informal learning can be recognised and awarded credit. Informal learning is that gained outside a formal learning setting, for example, through work experience, volunteering or leisure activities. It is important to stress that credit is not given for experience alone

but rather for the learning gained through that experience.

26. Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning Application Form must be completed in respect of any RPEL claim.
27. Recruitment Advisors working with the appropriate academic team will be responsible for the completion of these templates and collating documentation but approval of the RPEL application must be provided by the appropriate Programme Team Leader or another nominated academic. The application form will list all modules exempted and indicate the rationale for the exemption and all evidence required. While these are all individual applications, the following general principles are provided for guidance:
 - a. Prior learning must be clearly shown to be current; sufficient in terms of credit volume, authentic, relevant and valid;
 - b. Currency normally requires that the prior learning is no more than 5 years, see paragraph 21;
 - c. Where it is not possible to consider exemption from a full stage of an award, RPEL will be considered initially against individual modules.
 - d. A key element of the RPEL application is the evidence provided which could be in the form of a portfolio containing both direct and indirect evidence and may include an overarching summary of how the applicants learning through experience and the evidence provided meets the required learning outcomes.
 - e. Each applicant for RPEL will be required to attend an interview with the Programme Team Leader as a part of the approval process.

Process for consideration and approval of RPEL claims – Degree Apprenticeships (DA)

28. This section should be read in conjunction with the guidance provided by the Education and Skills Funding Agency which states that 'before an apprenticeship begins, the main training provider must assess the individual's prior learning to establish the 'starting point', or baseline, of the apprentice. This informs how much of the apprenticeship training content the individual requires. It checks that the apprenticeship is an appropriate training programme for the individual'. This assessment of prior learning must include both certificated (RPCL) and experiential (RPEL) learning.
29. All applicants for Degree Apprenticeships wishing to seek Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) against the relevant Degree Apprenticeship Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSB) must first complete an RPL Evidence Checklist/Skills Scan and provide a portfolio of evidence.
30. The DA RPL Checklist/Skills Scan, approved by the Admissions Committee, and supporting evidence must be completed during the application stage and prior to final enrolment and on boarding.

31. The DA RPL Checklist/Skills Scan and supporting portfolio will be reviewed by a panel consisting of the Degree Apprenticeship Programme Team Leader and appropriate members of the Apprenticeship Team.
32. Applications for RPL against the Degree Apprenticeship's Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours will be considered on:
 - a. Previous credit bearing awards at the same or higher level that demonstrate the specific attainment of duties and Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours, or;
 - b. Evidence of significant work experience that demonstrate achievement of the duties, Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours, or;
 - c. A combination of credit bearing awards and significant work experience.
33. The panel will meet prior to the start of each Degree Apprenticeship intake to consider the completed RPL Check list/Skills Scan and supporting evidence which will be presented by the Degree Apprenticeship Programme Team Leader. The outcome of the panel meeting will be communicated to the employer.
34. The total amount of funding discount and or reduction in programme duration available for each applicant is dependent on the RPL Checklist/Skills Scan and supporting evidence presented to the panel.
35. The total funding discount available and or reduction in programme duration per applicant is determined by the panel who will use the percentage of the Degree Apprenticeship's Knowledge Skills and Behaviours successfully covered by the completed RPL Checklist/Skills Scan and supporting evidence as a basis for calculating total percentage discount subject to the following conditions.
 - a. An Apprenticeship cannot be less than 12 months in duration
 - b. The maximum funding discount available per applicant is 50%
 - c. The funding discount and or reduction in programme duration will be subject to conditions and specifically: any Degree Apprentice's employer in receipt of a funding discount or reduction in duration of the programme will be required to pay the discounted funding balance and extend the duration of the Apprentice's programme if the supporting evidence is found to be unsubstantiated or falsified at any point of the duration of the Degree Apprenticeship
36. Any agreed funding discount and or reduction in programme duration by the panel may result in an equal reduction to the Apprentice's access to Work Based Coaching sessions and Knowledge, Skills and Behaviour Development Days throughout the duration of the Degree Apprenticeship.
37. A summary of all prior learning contributing to a place on an apprenticeship

programme is reported to the Degree Apprenticeship Management Committee and in order to comply with ESFA audit requirements:

- Where prior learning is awarded as contributing to a place on an apprenticeship programme this should be:
 - Included in the apprentice registration with the ESFA and their Individual Learner Record (ILR) should actually reflect the agreed RPL any funding adjustment and period of registration.
 - Recorded in the minutes of the DA Management committee and recorded in the apprentice’s evidence pack;
- All Apprentices must have a completed and signed Degree Apprenticeship Recognition of Prior Learning Declaration Form appended to their student record and form a part of the apprentice’s evidence pack.

Quality Assurance

38. A report containing details of RPCL and RPEL decisions reached will be prepared quarterly and presented to each meeting of the Admissions Committee for scrutiny. These reports are to include information on number of applications considered / approved, per course and qualification type used for RPCL and experience type use for RPEL and any other data that has been identified to be used to inform and improve University practice.

39. As part of annual programme monitoring, each Course Committee will receive a report on RPL from the Admissions Team.

40. Admissions Committee will provide an evaluation of RPL decisions and present an annual report to Academic Board.

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| Responsible SMT Lead: | Academic Registrar |
| Responsible Department: | Academic Affairs |
| Policy Contact: | Emma Lanaghan, Head of Admissions (elanaghan@arden.ac.uk) |
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