THE RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL)  
STAFF GUIDE 2014

These guidance notes should always be read in conjunction with University’s RPL Policy which they supplement.

Rationale

The University of Liverpool is committed to providing a high quality learning experience for all students. As part of this, the policy on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) has been developed to ensure a flexible system is in place to support students with a range of prior learning through experience to participate in University of Liverpool modules and programmes. The policy is intended to enable prospective students with non-traditional qualifications to gain entry to a particular programme, or to support students with prior learning through experience to gain credit towards a University of Liverpool award.

Introduction

In all cases of prior learning, Schools/Departments should adhere to the principles contained in the University’s RPL policy. It is recognised however that Schools/Departments have developed satisfactory procedures to deal with the admission of students with non-traditional qualifications and in these cases established practice should continue. Where claims for exemption are made, particularly when dealing with prior experiential learning, it is important that all Schools/Departments adopt a common approach in terms of documentation and procedure.

The Adviser/Assessor Roles

Schools/Departments can nominate more than one Adviser as necessary e.g. one for undergraduate level programmes, and one for postgraduate. In all RPL cases the Adviser and Assessor must be separate individuals. All Advisers and Assessors must undertake appropriate staff training in advance of beginning their RPL work. The training will be provided by the University.

Providing Student Guidance

Advisers should familiarise themselves with the content of the Student Guide and its appendix – Building a Portfolio.
Advisers should always provide realistic guidance regarding the likely amount of RPL credit which could be awarded. This avoids raising student expectations unrealistically and the potential for overpayment of fees.

Care should be taken when dealing with ‘mandatory’ modules within an APEL claim. Advisers should be aware that it may not be appropriate for students to claim RPL credit for certain mandatory modules.

Assessors must be satisfied that APEL evidence is reliable and can be appropriately attributed to the student. Students should therefore be advised to include witness testimony from relevant colleagues where ambiguity might arise.

Advisers should direct students to the programme and modules specifications to enable them to formulate an RPL claim within their first three months of study.

Appendix A provides sample items for inclusion on the Adviser's RPL record form.

The Presentation of Evidence of Experiential Learning
(See also Appendix to Student Guide)

Evidence of experiential learning may be direct or indirect.

Direct evidence is generated personally by the student. It may include:

- published articles
- assignments from previous non-academic-credit-bearing courses
- consultancy reports
- in-company projects and presentations
- reflective diaries
- professional or personal development portfolios compiled for professional bodies or for other awards.

Examples of indirect evidence may include:

- testimony and witness statements e.g. from an employer or client
- certificates of achievement / attendance from previous non-academic-credit-bearing courses.

Both are acceptable but there must be sufficient direct evidence to properly attribute the learning to the student.

 Normally evidence of prior learning will be collected into a portfolio. This should also contain background, contextual information and a commentary or reflective summary that clearly demonstrates learning arising from prior experience. The portfolio becomes the means of assessing the prior learning. It may also be possible to assess prior learning in other ways e.g. through the observation of performance. In these cases, care must be taken to document the assessment process.

The Assessment Process

Where an interview is to be used, the Adviser should provide guidance to the student on what the interview will cover. The RPL portfolio should also be passed back to the student to allow preparation.
Appendix B provides sample items for inclusion on the RPL assessment record form.

In cases of successful assessment of RPL decisions, this is recorded on the student record, but not on the final student transcript.

The RPL Process

The student should use the application form (see Appendix A) to claim admission or exemption.

The fee for making an RPL claim for exemption from study is: £100.

Departments will issue an invoice for the appropriate fee.

Although students must normally claim exemption from a module within 3 months of entering a programme, this may be waived where additional new programme modules are approved at a later date.

Advisers should return the RPL portfolio and all original documentation to the student following the assessment decision.

In order to ensure that the RPL credit for a specific module is entered as a code, SAS should be notified of all decisions regarding RPL, via SPIDER. Where a student is not yet registered (i.e. if RPL is allowed for exemption from a module as part of the admissions process) then the School/Department should notify SAS retrospectively. If the RPL is not linked to a specific module, the RPL will be recorded as a credit value only.

Complaints regarding the conduct of the RPL process but not the academic judgment, should be dealt with by the Head of Department who, in cases of student entry onto a programme, should refer to the QAA Quality Code for HE, part B.

Monitoring RPL practice at Departmental Level

The University expects Faculties and Departments to monitor RPL activity. This is the responsibility of the nominated School Lead for RPL, or their Deputy. A key tool for monitoring the effectiveness of the RPL scheme and associated practice is student feedback. Sample questions for inclusion on student evaluation forms are listed in Appendix D to this document.

It is good practice for the Adviser to report periodically on RPL activity within the department to the relevant Board of Studies. A list of sample indicators which could be used for monitoring purposes is attached in Appendix E to this document.

Heads of Department should make reference to the numbers of RPL students in Annual Subject Review.

Concerns regarding implementation of the RPL policy should be raised with the School Lead, who may wish to discuss issues with the Head of the Centre for Lifelong Learning.

Appendices A - E to this document
The examples of questions/items to be included on RPL process forms contained in Appendices A - E of this document are examples only and may be changed

July 2014