



# Recognition of Prior Learning

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1.2	Updated to add section on record keeping and criteria	Dr F. Keissarian	Feb 22
2	Updated to add section on currency and appeal against decision	Dr F. Keissarian	Oct 23
3	New introduction and headings improve readability; "Awarding RPL" section clarifies credit and degree impact; roles and scope updated; RPL appeal timeframe set at 10 working days.	J.Simpson	Sept 25

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## 1. Introduction

The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy at Ada, The National College for Digital Skills (Ada) is designed to acknowledge and value the skills, knowledge, and competencies that individuals have acquired through formal, non-formal, and informal learning experiences. Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is a process which facilitates entry with advanced standing to an Open University (The OU) validated programme at Ada. This is normally achieved by the award of credit to the student, thus exempting them from studying a particular module or modules on the programme or allowing them entry into a higher level of the programme via credit transfer.

RPL is a process based on academic judgement that supports students in using their prior learning towards a higher education qualification. It ensures that students do not have to repeat learning they have already successfully undertaken and promotes student mobility by facilitating credit accumulation and transfer. In doing so, RPL aligns with the Quality Code expectation B6:

*“Higher education providers operate equitable, valid, and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought. B6”*

Students may make RPL applications during the application process for admission to the college and during their studies. The guiding principle of RPL and credit transfer is that it adheres to the college’s regulatory framework and that decisions are made transparently, fairly, and consistently across the college, ensuring equality of opportunity for all applicants and students.

This policy underscores Ada College’s commitment to lifelong learning, equitable

access, and academic integrity, providing clear pathways for students to have their prior learning recognised in a manner that supports their educational and career progression.

## **2. Definitions**

### **Prior learning for which credits has been awarded (RPL)**

This is where a student has undertaken prior learning which has led to the award of credits or qualifications by a UK higher education degree awarding body according to the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (FHEQ), October 2014. In such cases the college will determine at application stage the status of the award, including volume and level, in relation to the programme the student is applying for. This is a standard part of the admissions process and therefore does normally not require formal assessment of the student's prior learning.

Students may be exempted from studying a module, or modules, based on the prior learning, but may also be admitted directly to a higher level of the award. For example, a student may be admitted directly into level 5 or level 6 of the BSc degree; credits will not be awarded in relation to specific modules but awarded against the level or levels.

### **Prior experiential learning (RPEL)**

This is where a student has gained experiential learning which is at the appropriate level to be recognised via the award of RPL credits. This will involve an assessment process by academic staff. The learning gained through the experience is being assessed, rather than the experience itself. If the learning is recognised as appropriate in relation to the specific Ada programme/module(s), a proportion of

credit, at the appropriate level is awarded to the student.

### **3. Principles of Recognition of Prior Learning**

#### **Responsibility and Promotion**

Applicants or students are responsible for initiating an RPL claim, while the college and programme teams are responsible for promoting awareness of the process.

#### **Timing of application**

RPL claims should ideally be submitted before the start of the relevant learning in the programme.

#### **Support and Guidance**

Applicants for RPL should receive supportive guidance during the process, including advice about the evidence that is considered appropriate, the criteria against which claims are judged, timescales and arrangements for providing feedback.

#### **Credit Reuse**

Credit from a previously completed programme cannot normally be reused for an equivalent or lower award. Reuse is only considered for progression to a higher award, subject to RPL limits.

#### **Assessment**

Assessment is made against RPL criteria and module learning outcomes. While there is no formal limit on the age of prior learning, sector practice often considers five years as an indicator of currency. Decisions are delegated to the Higher

Education Quality and Standards Lead or the Programme Leader for Degree Apprenticeships. A fair match is generally defined as 80% alignment with the relevant module(s) outcomes.

## **4. Awarding RPL**

### **Compliance with Regulations**

RPL may only be awarded in strict accordance with Ada's academic regulations and the regulatory framework of the Open University (OU) validated awards. All RPL decisions are subject to oversight by the relevant programme team and senior academic staff to ensure consistency, fairness, and compliance with institutional and validating body requirements.

### **No Marks for RPL Credits**

RPL credits are awarded to recognise prior learning and exempt students from specific modules or enable entry to a higher level of study; however, they do not carry marks towards a student's or apprentice's degree classification, unless the credits were previously earned at Ada. This ensures that degree classifications reflect the performance of students in modules assessed under Ada's teaching and examination standards.

### **Degree Classification**

The calculation of degree classification is based solely on modules undertaken and assessed at Ada. RPL credits, while contributing to the students or apprentices' progression and fulfilment of credit requirements for an award, are not included in the mark-based classification. This maintains the integrity and comparability of awards and ensures that final degree outcomes accurately reflect students' achievements within the college.

## **Documentation and Transparency**

All RPL credits must be clearly recorded in the student record system, specifying the module(s) or level to which they apply, the source of the credit, and the date of award. This information must also be reflected in official documentation provided to the student, including transcripts and award statements, so that the use of RPL is transparent and verifiable. Clear documentation ensures that students, academic staff, and external stakeholders can track the contribution of prior learning to programme completion.

## **Communication of RPL Awards**

Students must be informed in writing of any RPL awarded, including details of the modules or levels exempted, the rationale for the decision, and any implications for their study pathway. This promotes clarity, avoids misunderstandings, and allows students to plan their remaining studies effectively.

## **5. RPL Process**

### **Enquiry**

Applicants or students seeking information about RPL will receive guidance and the relevant application form (appended to this document). Ada may use this generic form, adapt it to suit specific needs, or develop its own proforma, provided all essential information is captured.

### **Application**

Applicants or students submit a completed application form along with supporting evidence. This may include module outlines from previous study, transcripts, award certificates, diploma supplements, or a portfolio, where appropriate. In certain cases,

a meeting may be arranged with the applicant or student to clarify or explore the claim further.

## **Decision**

RPL claims are reviewed by the appropriate staff: the Higher Education Quality and Standards Lead in consultation with the Admissions staff for applicants and the Programme Leader for current students. Authority to approve RPL normally rests with Ada and is not delegated to The Open University (OU), the validating institution. Applicants and students should be informed of the outcome in a timely manner.

## **Record Keeping**

All decisions and the rationale must be clearly documented on the application form. If a claim is not approved, the applicant must complete the full programme, and current students must complete the module(s) to which the claim relates. If a claim is approved, the reasoning behind the decision must be clearly recorded. For RPL involving credit from another institution, details of the awarding institution, credit level, volume, and date of achievement must be documented.

# **6. RPL Assessment Criteria and Regulations**

## **Validity**

The learning or achievement being claimed must be comparable to the standard and content of the programme or module(s) for which RPL is sought. Evidence provided should clearly demonstrate that the learning aligns with the intended outcomes of the relevant module(s).



## **Sufficiency**

There must be adequate evidence to demonstrate that the claimed prior learning covers the required outcomes. Typically, a claim should show at least an 80% alignment between the student's prior learning and the learning outcomes of the module(s).

## **Currency**

Assessment must confirm that the learning remains current and relevant. In certain modules, the age of prior learning may be a factor. RPL regulations may require that learning acquired more than five years ago is supplemented with a portfolio or evidence of more recent achievements.

## **Authenticity**

Admissions and academic team members must be satisfied that the learning claimed is the student's own work. Experiential learning claims should be supported by direct evidence, such as endorsements from referees or documented proof of achievement.

## **Regulations**

The award of RPL is governed by the Regulations for OU Validated Awards. All RPL decisions must comply with these regulations to ensure consistency, fairness, and academic integrity.

## **RPL Credit Limits**

Only a specified proportion of RPL credits may be awarded for a programme to ensure that students complete a substantial portion of their studies at Ada College.

For example, BSc Honours Degree students must complete at least 120 Level 6 Recognition of Prior Learning

credits at Ada. These credit limits do not apply to ex-Ada students re-entering their original programme of study.

## **Re-use of Credit**

Credit previously earned may be applied towards a higher-level award, subject to RPL limits. For example, credits obtained from a foundation degree may be recognised towards the completion of an honours BSc degree, provided this complies with the RPL framework.

## **7. Recording of RPL**

### **Student Record System**

All RPL credits awarded are recorded in the student record system. Credits are assigned either to the relevant programme level or to the specific module(s) for which they have been recognised. This ensures accurate tracking of a student's progress and achievement.

### **Boards of Examiners**

RPL credits are included in exam board reports, allowing board members to review a student's complete credit profile. This ensures transparency in assessing whether a student has met the requirements to progress or to be awarded a qualification.

### **Transcripts**

Students completing an OU-validated award at Ada College will receive a Transcript Report detailing all credits undertaken, including RPL credits. The report clearly identifies which credits were awarded through RPL and the corresponding dates, providing a transparent record of prior learning recognised towards the award.

## **8. Appeal**

Appeals against decisions in respect of applications for RPL will only be considered where there is clear evidence of a significant administrative or regulatory error; there is no provision for appeal against the academic judgement. Any appeal must be made in writing and submitted within 10 days from the date of issue of the decision, citing the grounds and basis of the appeal, with evidence as appropriate.