Annex R: Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

N.B. Where the text states ‘School’ this should be understood to refer to ‘School’ or ‘Department’ at the sub-divisional level, as appropriate.

This section of the Code of Practice provides guidance on the practice and operation of RPL.

1. General Statement

1.1 The University will operate a demonstrably transparent and rigorous RPL process that will recognise relevant learning obtained prior to the commencement of study at the University.

Claims for RPL are assessment decisions, therefore, those recommending approval of a claim for RPL should be confident that the prior learning involved is comparable to assessment/learning undertaken at the University.

Decisions regarding the awarding of RPL will be a matter of academic judgement.

1.2 The University also operates admissions procedures relating to:

- Claims for mid-year transfer from a course of study at another institution;
- Claims for admission without the threshold entry qualifications.

The Recognition of Prior Learning will accommodate claims for exemption from certain modules or stages of a course of study and should follow the guidelines below.

1.3 Definitions

1.4.1 **RPL** Recognition of Prior Learning - is the umbrella term used at the University of Kent to describe the assessment and recognition of prior learning for use towards a Kent award, through one of the mechanisms defined below.¹

1.4.2 **RPEL:** Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning - this is the process through which learning achieved outside education or training systems is assessed and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes.

1.4.3 **RPCL:** Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning – at Kent RPCL relates to learning at higher education level, which has been formally achieved, but which has not been awarded credits or a qualification by a UK HEI. For

¹ RPL: The Recognition of Prior Learning is a process which recognises previous learning for the purposes of claiming credit against an award (such as a Diploma or a Degree) regardless of where or how the learning was achieved. [https://seec.org.uk/for-learners/](https://seec.org.uk/for-learners/) (last accessed March 2020)
example, qualifications awarded by a non-UK higher education degree awarding body.

1.4.4 **Credit Transfer**: relates to learning at higher education level, which has been formally achieved, and awarded credits or a qualification by a UK HEI.

1.4.5 **Articulation Arrangements**: in an articulation arrangement, an assessment is made of the equivalence of the learning undertaken at another institution with that required by a stage or stages of an appropriate course at Kent. This is with the aim of securing direct entry for a cohort or cohorts of students from the partner institution to the Kent course.

### 1.4 Parameters for RPL claims

1.4.1. The maximum limits on the amount of RPL that can be claimed per academic stage and per course of study will be the same limits as permitted for Credit Transfer as detailed in Annex 3 of the University of Kent Credit Framework:

1.4.2. The minimum volume of credit that may be awarded for any RPL claim is five credits;

1.4.3. The awarding of RPL will not carry any numerical mark and will not contribute to the overall stage average or degree classification.

1.4.4. RPL will be awarded in a volume appropriate to the granularity of the course in accordance with the limits detailed in sections 1.4.1-1.4.2 above;

1.4.5. RPL assessors should consider the full range of assessment methods so that the most appropriate is utilised for the student to demonstrate their skills and knowledge against the required learning outcomes. The following criteria should be considered:

- **Acceptability** – is there any appropriate match between the evidence presented and the learning being demonstrated? Is the evidence valid and reliable?

- **Sufficiency** – is there sufficient evidence to demonstrate fully the achievement of the learning claimed?

- **Authenticity** – is the evidence clearly related to the applicants’ own efforts and achievements?

- **Currency** – does the evidence relate to current learning? Where professional bodies and/or Schools have specific requirements and/or time limits for the currency of evidence, certification or demonstration of learning, these should be made clear and transparent.

1.4.6 Where the evidence relating to an applicant's prior learning is submitted in a language other than English, the RPL assessor must either possess sufficient competence in the language in question in order to make an effective assessment or must direct the applicant to provide a translation into English of any prior assessed work submitted in support of the application.
1.4.7 Where any application for RPL is found to contain falsified information or plagiarised work, the University reserves the right to reject the application on these grounds. Appeals against such decisions should be made in-line with the University’s Withdrawal of Offers procedures.²

1.4.8 Where falsified information or plagiarised work is suspected in a submission from a University-registered student, it will be considered under the Academic Misconduct, or Non-Academic Misconduct disciplinary procedure, as appropriate.

1.4.9 Use of RPL as a means of transferring credit between two University awards is subject to the restrictions on ‘spent’ credit set out in the Credit Framework (see, in particular, clause 10.5).

1.4.10 Prior learning will normally be considered ‘current’ where it has been achieved within the last five years.

2 General Credit

2.1 General Credit may be defined as follows:

“Al all assessed learning can be awarded credit. The credit gained is a general recognition of assessed learning at specified levels – i.e. general credit. When the credit is recognised through the admissions procedure of an HEI as directly contributing to a course, it becomes specific. The change in designation from general to specific relates directly to the relevance of the learning to the proposed course and/or modules.”³

General Credit therefore represents the whole of the learning achieved on an accredited course. An honours degree would have a General Credit value of 360 credits. Specific Credit is the volume and level of credit which can be used from the General Credit value for RPL into another course.

2.1.1 For example: a student gains a qualification in History, worth 120 credits at level 4 from a UK Higher Education Institution.

The General Credit value of this qualification is 120 credits at level 4. If the applicant requests RPL on the basis of this to a similar Kent degree course in History, it is probable that all of the General Credit value could be recognised. However if the applicant requests RPL with the same level 4 qualification to a Kent degree course in History and Politics, only a limited amount of the credit might be recognised. This would be determined by the mapping between the external and Kent course/module learning outcomes to identify how much credit could be used for RPCL. It may be that 60 credits of the History qualification could be used for the History part of the first year
of the History and Politics course. These 60 credits would be the **Specific Credit** value.

If the application for RPL were to a completely unrelated course, e.g. Forensic Science, then it is less likely that any of the General Credit could be recognised as Specific Credit, since it may not be possible to map the learning outcomes from the external History course to the Forensic Science learning outcomes. There may be exceptions to this if a course has modules covering more generic skills, such as research skills.

2.2 For RPEL a General Credit value can be awarded to the RPEL portfolio submitted. If appropriate, the General Credit value can then be used in its entirety if it can be mapped to the learning outcomes of the module(s) or stages for which credit is being claimed. Again it may be that only a specific amount of the General Credit can be mapped to the learning outcomes of the module(s) for which credit is sought.

2.3 For all RPL claims it should be noted that the Kent Credit Framework and course rules may limit the amount of credit than can be applied for.

2.4 Kent recognise the validity of studies undertaken at other UK Higher Education Institutions, therefore, it will normally recognise the General Credit value of qualifications obtained from these institutions. **Note**, however, that it cannot be assumed that the General Credit value can automatically be fully recognised as credit into a Kent award. An assessment must first be carried out to determine what level and volume of credit can be used for an RPL claim. In addition the Kent Credit Framework and course rules may limit the amount of credit that can be used for RPL.

The Specific Credit value can never exceed the General Credit value of the qualification being used to apply for RPL.

3. **Advice and Guidance**

3.1 The University will provide clear and accessible information on the full procedures for the application, consideration and awarding of RPL. The University will also provide generic advice and guidance to applicants and academic staff on individual cases and to other stakeholders including external examiners regarding RPL in general.

3.2 The information and guidance provided by the University will state clearly the terminology, processes and procedures relating to the operation of RPL at Kent.

3.3 The University will make clear in its advice and guidance full details of the assessment process and requirements, including timescales, opportunities for resubmission, key Divisional contacts involved in the consideration of claims and the process of notification of outcome.

3.4 The University will provide clear generic advice and guidance to both potential applicants and Divisions.
3.5 Divisions will ensure that accurate and timely feedback on the outcome of RPL claims is communicated to applicants.

3.6 The University may designate a specific department or section to carry out the functions set out at sections 3.1-3.5.

3.7 The University may appoint an External Adviser for RPL to offer specific advice and guidance where required.

4 Responsibilities of Divisions

4.1 It is the responsibility of Divisions to clarify and state in course specifications which elements of a course, if any, may not be subject to RPL. This is particularly pertinent for professionally accredited courses.

4.2 The suitability of RPL assessment methods should be considered when deciding on the most appropriate form for a claim. This consideration should be carried out on a case by case basis, in order that the student may demonstrate knowledge of the required learning outcomes. The nature and range of assessment required should be communicated clearly to the student.

4.3 Divisions should have mechanisms in place to provide students with feedback on the outcome of an RPL assessment.

5 RPL in Collaborative Provision

5.1 Partner Colleges and Validated Institutions

Applications for RPL made by students studying for a University award at a Partner College or Validated Institution will have their application assessed and a recommendation made by the relevant Course Leader/Admissions Officer at the partner for the course in question.

Recommendations will then be considered for approval by the relevant Divisional Committee (Education or Graduate Studies as relevant to the provision).

Data on claims approved for Partner Institutions will be reported to the Autumn Term meeting of the Education and Academic Standards Committee (see sections 6.6, 7.9, 8.1.6 below).

5.2 Courses Leading to Dual Awards or Joint Awards

Recommendations by partner institutions for the award of credit awarded via RPL will be considered in line with the relevant requirements below.
6. Procedure for the Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning

6.1 Application for RPCL

6.1.1 A new applicant will notify Admissions of their intention to claim RPCL. The claim will be passed by Marketing, Outreach, Recruitment and Admissions (MORA) to the Admissions Officer for the relevant course.

6.1.2 An existing student will notify their Course Leader of their intention to claim RPCL. The Course Leader will carry out the role of the Admissions Officer, as set out below.

6.1.3 Early application is recommended for all RPCL claims. Applicants must be aware of the admission deadlines for the courses for which credit is being sought.

6.2 Assessment of the Claim

6.2.1 The Admissions Officer will assess the claim for RPCL and, if considered appropriate, will make a recommendation for the award of credit based on the available evidence using the RPCL Recommendation Form (form 1).

6.2.2 In assessing the claim, the Admissions Officer can ask for advice if they feel it is a complex or unusual claim. Advice can be sought from the Course Leader in the first instance.

6.2.3 For each claim the rules regarding ‘spent’ credit must be considered. These can be found in the Credit Framework, section 10.4.

6.2.4 The RPCL Recommendation Form should be forwarded by the Admissions Officer to the Secretary to the relevant Board of Studies for the course, who will pass the claim for RPCL to the Chair for consideration. Once a decision on the claim has been reached, the Admissions Officer and Marketing, Outreach, Recruitment and Admissions (MORA) will be informed by the Secretary to the Board of the outcome. Decisions will normally be taken by Chair’s action and reported to the next appropriate Board of Studies’ meeting for the course.

6.2.5 Claims submitted by existing students should be forwarded by the Course Leader in line with section 6.2.4.

6.3 Informing the Applicant

6.3.1 Once a decision is finalised the applicant should be informed via an Admissions Offer letter. If a claim is rejected the applicant should be informed in writing as to why and what the next action should be.

---

4 Whether a claim is complex is for the person assessing the claim to determine.

5 Admissions Officers should only submit forms where they support approval of the RPCL being claimed.
6.3.2 Where the applicant is an existing student, the Course Leader should inform the applicant in writing, detailing the level/volume of credit to be awarded. If a claim is rejected the applicant should be informed in writing as to why and what the next action should be.

6.3.3 If a claim has been rejected then any resubmission of the RPCL claim must be made before commencement of the module(s) for which credit is sought.

6.3.4 If approved, the RPCL will be recorded on the Student Data System through the appropriate mechanism.

6.3.5 Credit awarded for RPL will be recorded as such on the student transcript.

6.4 Feedback

Feedback on the claim decision should be provided to the applicant on request if their claim is rejected. An opportunity to resubmit the claim should be offered and supported.

6.5 Reporting Decisions to the Education and Academic Standards Committee (EASC)

6.5.1 Each Division shall employ a mechanism to record all RPL decisions, including those made in relation to RPCL claims.

6.5.2 The following data should be recorded for RPCL claims:

- the course the claim was made against
- the volume and level of credit awarded
- the institution where previous credit was achieved
- the course on which previous credit was achieved

6.5.3 This data should be reported to EASC during Autumn Term in order to identify trends and to help target advice and guidance in relation to RPL. EASC will not reverse RPL decisions, but will make recommendations on future decisions where appropriate.

6.5.4 Divisions should also ensure a mechanism is in place to provide a sample of RPCL claims to EASC should members request to view these as part of considering RPL data.

7 Procedure for the Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning

7.1 Application for RPEL

7.1.1 Early application is recommended for all RPEL claims. Applicants must be aware of the admission deadlines for the courses for which credit is being sought.

7.1.2 Both new applicants and existing students should allow a minimum of six weeks and preferably one term to complete their RPEL portfolio, and should consider the recommended timescales for RPEL to ensure that there
is sufficient time to have an RPEL claim approved before the module(s) they are claiming credit towards commence. Exact timing of an RPEL claim varies depending on the nature of the claim and length of time required to collate the RPEL portfolio.

7.1.3 If at any stage those considering a claim feel it is a complex or unusual application, advice can be sought from the Course Leader.\(^6\)

7.1.4 The following procedure assumes that the assessment method used for the RPEL claim will be a portfolio.

7.2 **Initial Consultation**

7.2.1 Divisions should make provision for an initial consultation to be carried out between a suitable member of staff and the potential applicant. (This could be a Course Leader or Admissions Officer.)

7.2.2 For each claim the rules regarding ‘spent’ credit must be considered. These can be viewed on the University of Kent Credit Framework, section 10.5.

7.3 **Portfolio Supervisor**

7.3.1 The key roles of the portfolio supervisor will be i) to guide the applicant in developing their RPEL portfolio against the learning outcomes; and ii) to assess the portfolio, ensuring it is complete and suitable.

7.3.2 The Admissions Officer for the course for which RPEL is sought should identify a suitable RPEL Portfolio Supervisor. This could be the Admissions Officer or a relevant subject specialist from the Division.

7.4 **Portfolio Development**

7.4.1 The applicant will develop their portfolio over an agreed period of time. The Course Leader of the course for which credit is being sought should be contacted at the development stage to ensure the RPEL portfolio is suitable for submission, both in terms of academic requirements and subject area.

7.4.2 When the portfolio is complete the Portfolio Supervisor will complete the RPEL Portfolio Supervisor Form (form 3) and will recommend whether the RPEL portfolio has met the learning outcomes for the credit applied for.

7.5 **Assessment of Claim**

7.5.1 Portfolios should, where possible, be submitted in an electronic format. If this is not possible then a hard copy should be submitted.

7.5.2 The Portfolio Supervisor should arrange for the portfolio to be submitted to the Secretary to the relevant Board of Studies for the Course, who will pass it to the Chair for consideration. Once a decision on the claim has been reached, the Admissions Officer and the Marketing, Outreach, Recruitment and Admissions (MORA) will be informed by the Secretary to the Board. Decisions will normally be taken by Chair’s action and reported to the next

---

\(^6\) Whether a claim is complex is for the person assessing the claim to determine.
appropriate Board of Studies meeting for the course. The Portfolio Supervisor should submit the completed Portfolio Supervisor Form with the portfolio.

7.5.3 The applicant should retain their own copy of the RPEL portfolio.

7.5.4 If a large number of applicants seek entry with RPEL onto the same Kent course (i.e. from the same professional background), the Division may wish to facilitate a special approval meeting to consider them. This meeting would include relevant subject area members of the Board of Studies and where required a subject specialist to view and consider portfolios and approve decisions.

7.6 Informing the Applicant

7.6.1 Once a decision is finalised the applicant should be informed via an Admissions Offer letter. If a claim is rejected the applicant should be informed in writing as to why and what the next action should be.

7.6.2 Where the applicant is an existing student, the Course Leader should inform the student in writing, detailing the level/volume of credit to be awarded. If a claim is rejected the student should be informed in writing as to why and what the next action should be.

7.6.3 If a claim has been rejected then any resubmission of the RPEL claim must be made before commencement of the module(s) for which credit is sought.

7.6.4 If approved, the RPEL will be recorded on the Student Data System through the appropriate mechanism.

7.7 Feedback

Feedback on the claim decision should be provided to the applicant on request if their claim is rejected. An opportunity to resubmit the portfolio should be offered and supported.

7.8 Reporting Decision to the Education and Academic Standards Committee (EASC)

7.8.1 Each Division shall employ a mechanism to record all RPL decisions, including those made in relation to RPEL claims.

7.8.2 The following data should be recorded for RPEL claims:

- the course the claim was made against
- the volume and level of credit awarded
- the format in which the claim was submitted

7.8.3 This data should be reported to EASC during Autumn Term in order to identify trends and to help target advice and guidance in relation to RPEL. EASC will not reverse RPEL decisions, but will make recommendations on future decisions where appropriate.
7.8.4 Divisions should also ensure a mechanism is in place to provide a sample of RPEL claims to EASC should members request to view these as part of considering RPL data.

8. Procedure for Credit Transfer

8.1 Application for Credit Transfer

8.1.1 Where formal prior learning has taken place at a UK HEI it will be regarded as Credit Transfer and may be processed as below.

8.1.2 Admissions Officers, in consultation with appropriate Directors of Studies, are authorised to approve requests for Credit Transfer within the limits specified in Annex 3 of the Credit Framework which are supported by official transcripts or equivalent provided that they are satisfied that the applicant has achieved learning outcomes equivalent to those of the stage(s) or module(s) from which exemption is to be granted.

8.1.3 For an existing student making a Credit Transfer claim the Course Leader will carry out the role of the Admissions Officer.

8.1.4 In line with other forms of RPL the level and volume of credits from which the applicant is granted exemption may be less than those on which the application is based.

8.1.5 A record of all such Credit Transfer decisions and a copy of the evidence on which they were based should be kept by the Admissions Officer concerned.

8.1.6 Each Division should have in place a mechanism to report this data annually in the Autumn Term to the Education and Academic Standards Committee (EASC) in line with the requirements for other types of RPL (See sections 6.6 and 7.9).

8.1.7 In assessing a claim for Credit Transfer, the Admissions Officer can ask for advice if they feel it is a complex or unusual claim. Advice can be sought from the Course Leader in the first instance.

8.1.8 For each claim the rules regarding ‘spent’ credit must be considered. These can be found in the Credit Framework, section 10.5.

8.2 Informing the Applicant

8.2.1 Once a decision is finalised the applicant should be informed via an Admissions Offer letter. If a claim is rejected the applicant should be informed in writing as to why and what the next action should be.

8.2.2 Where the applicant is an existing student, the Course Leader should inform the applicant in writing, detailing the level/volume of credit to be awarded. If

---

7 Whether a claim is complex is for the person assessing the claim to determine.
a claim is rejected the applicant should be informed in writing as to why and what the next action should be.

8.2.3 If a claim has been rejected then any resubmission of the Credit Transfer claim must be made before commencement of the module(s) for which credit is sought.

8.2.4 The Credit Transfer should be recorded on the Student Data System through the appropriate mechanism.

8.2.5 Credit awarded for RPL will be recorded as such on the student transcript.

8.3 Feedback

Feedback on the claim decision should be provided to the applicant on request if their claim is rejected. An opportunity to resubmit the claim should be offered and supported.

8.4 Credit Transfer – Validated Institutions and Partner Colleges

Credit Transfer claims originating from students studying for Kent awards at Partner Institutions (Validated Institutions and Partner Colleges) must be submitted to the Chair of the appropriate Divisional Committee (Education/Graduate Studies, as relevant to the provision) for consideration.

8.5 Completion of Credit Transfer – Partner Institutions Recommendation Form

8.5.1 The Recommendation Form: Credit Transfer – Partner Institutions (form 2) should be completed by the relevant Course Leader/Admissions Officer in the Partner Institution for the course in question, to indicate how the applicant's prior learning meets the learning outcomes of the University module(s) or stages concerned.

8.5.2 Completed forms for Partner Colleges and Validated Institutions should be submitted via the Quality Assurance and Compliance Office (QACO) (qaco@kent.ac.uk).

8.5.3 Forms should only be submitted where the Partner Institution supports approval of the Credit Transfer being claimed.

8.5.4 Forms will be forwarded to the Chair of the relevant Divisional Committee (as relevant to the level of the provision) for consideration. Once a decision on the claim has been reached, the Partner Institution will be informed. Decisions will be taken by Chair’s action.

9. Procedure for Establishing Articulation Agreements

9.1 The University will consider entering into articulation agreements with institutions that have satisfied the requirements for pre-collaborative institutional approval as set out in Annex O of the Code of Practice for Taught Courses: Approval and Quality Assurance Procedures for Collaborative Partnerships.
9.2 In an articulation arrangement, an assessment is made of the equivalence of the learning undertaken at another institution or with that required by a stage or stages of an appropriate course of study at Kent, with the aim of securing direct entry via a suitable RPL protocol for an agreed cohort or cohorts of students from the partner institution to a specified Kent course.

9.2.1 Such RPL protocols should be based on a mapping of the equivalence, in terms of level, volume and relevance, of learning outcomes arising from modules considered cognate between appropriate courses at each party. The RPL assessment must be undertaken by an appropriate member of academic staff in the subject area at Kent. Such assessments must comply with the limits on the amount of credit that might be awarded via RPL as set out in Annex 3 of Kent’s Credit Framework for Taught Courses of Study.

9.3 Quality Assurance

9.3.1 Articulation arrangements must conform to the requirements of this Annex.

9.3.2 The Division undertaking the RPL protocol will be responsible for ensuring that it conforms to the requirements of Annex R. The Quality Assurance and Compliance Office will advise on this process.

9.3.3 Any RPL protocol must be ratified by the appropriate Chair of the Board of Studies prior to the admission of any cohort of students to a Kent course by this means.

9.3.4 Following the approval of the RPL protocol, any amendments to the learning outcomes of any of the modules upon which the initial assessment of the equivalence of learning must be reported by the parties. Any such amendment will require reassessment of the RPL Protocol and its reconfirmation by the Chair of the Board of Studies prior to the admission of further cohorts of students by this means.

10. Appeals

10.1 RPL decisions are a matter of academic judgement, and therefore a decision to reject an RPL claim cannot be appealed on the basis that the applicant does not agree with the outcome.

10.2 However, appeals against RPL decisions will be considered in the following areas:

- where there is reasonable ground supported by objective evidence to believe that there has been administrative, procedural or clerical error of such a nature as to have affected the recommendation of the Board of Studies /Divisional Committee; and/or
- where there is evidence to support a claim which the applicant was, for good reason, unable to submit previously; and/or
- where there is evidence of prejudice or bias or the perception of prejudice or bias against the applicant.
10.3 Appeals should be made in-line with the requirements of Annex 13 of the Credit Framework.

11. Further Guidance

The following guidance documents are available to support the submission of RPL claims:

- Guidance for Applicants/Students;
- Guidance for Staff;
- Example Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) Portfolio.