

RPL Applicant Guidance: RPEL Portfolio Guidelines

Introduction

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) allows students who wish to enrol on award bearing taught programmes of study at the University of York to claim 'credit' for previous learning. The previous learning must be relevant to the programme for which they are applying, and if their application is successful, the credit will count towards their chosen programme of study.

Applicants will need to demonstrate that what has been learnt and achieved through past experiences is equivalent to what is needed for the target module(s) against which exemption is being claimed.

The prior experiential learning for which accreditation is sought must have taken place not more than five years before the date of the candidate's proposed enrolment on the University programme. All requests for exemption on the basis of prior learning gained more than five years before must provide satisfactory evidence to the Department of updating and on-going development in order to demonstrate that learning is current.

A tutor-led RPEL portfolio is where a member of University staff supports a student with the development of a portfolio as an alternative mode of assessment for a given module. A portfolio must be submitted documenting evidence of how learning from prior personal or professional experience meets the learning outcomes of the module(s) against which a claim is being made. A portfolio could include a combination of prior experiential and non-certificated learning. The portfolio should be cross-referenced to the learning outcomes of the module(s) for which exemption is being claimed.

Definition

RPEL (Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning) is the assignment of credit for learning which has been acquired outside formally certified education or training systems.

Background

In order to accredit previous experience RPEL applicants will be asked to provide a portfolio evidencing how the learning outcomes for the module that he/she intends to claim against have been met.

The purpose of providing a portfolio is to evidence that the applicant has met the learning outcomes of a specific module through experience. If the RPEL claim is accepted the applicant will be awarded the relevant credits towards his/her chosen award pathway.

RPEL claims must be agreed prior to commencing a programme of study, and cannot be applied for retrospectively after commencing the programme.

There are two stages to the RPEL application process:

1. Request for Initial Assessment of Claim
2. Full RPEL Application

Following final approval and admission to the programme of study this will be represented as 'Prior Learning' on a student's academic transcript.

Initial RPEL claim assessment

In the first instance, applicants must complete the 'RPEL Request for Initial Assessment Claim' form. Applicants are required to prepare a 500-word proposal on this form which should state:

- the number of credits for which RPEL is being sought, and the module(s) against which the credits will be counted against
- where the experiential learning took place
- when the experiential learning took place

The form requires applicants to outline the nature of the experience and relevance to the proposed programme.

An initial RPEL request should normally be received by the Department at least **six months** prior to the beginning of the relevant programme of study.

The Department will respond to the initial request within ten days. Three members of the RPL Committee will consider an Initial RPEL application, one of which will be a subject specialist. If the RPL Committee members judge the information on the form indicates grounds for an RPEL claim, the applicant will be asked to provide more detailed information. At this point the Department will notify the applicant of the way in which the claim will be assessed and who they should contact for academic support to prepare the portfolio. Applicants will be notified in writing of the final date of submission and the submission arrangements.

Advice regarding preparing an RPEL Initial Assessment can be sought from the RPL Committee Chair Ros Brownlow(ros.brownlow@york.ac.uk).

Nature of the support for the portfolio

The applicant will be allocated an RPL Committee member subject specialist who will support him/her to meet the learning outcomes. Together the applicant and the tutor will arrange tutorial sessions. They will consider the 500-word proposal agreed at the Initial RPEL stage and will agree a learning contract to support the submission of the portfolio.

Portfolio guidance

Following approval for the Initial RPEL claim applicants need to prepare their portfolio for submission. A date to commence the portfolio will be agreed (note this must be within six months of the initial application). A submission date will be set for 16 weeks after the agreed start date.

When preparing the portfolio the applicant should take the following guidance into consideration:

- it should reflect the learning outcomes, current practice and guidelines
- it should include reflection on practice
- a component of the portfolio should consider how the learning outcomes were achieved
- it must be clearly referenced in the main body and accompanied by a reference list
- it must be typed

The portfolio should contain:

- a professional narrative/essay on the learning gained and demonstrate how this matches the target learning outcomes against which exemption is being claimed
- samples of work eg assessment or leadership reports; evidence of supervision
- witness testimony from relevant people such as line managers, colleagues, or others who can confirm achievement/learning gained
- it may be relevant to include details of study days attended or non-accredited courses as evidence of meeting the learning outcomes

Portfolio presentation

The portfolio should be submitted in a secure lever arch file binder. File dividers may be used to organise the sections.

- the first page should be a cover sheet stating the applicant's full name and the date of submission
- the Initial RPEL Assessment form detailing the proposal should follow the cover page
- a copy of the Learning Contract which includes evidence of meetings with your supervisor in mandatory
- an index of contents should then follow the proposal
- material should be organised in a logical manner within the folder

Portfolio submission

The full RPEL Application Form and accompanying portfolio must be completed and submitted by the 16 week deadline, which must be at least three months prior to the beginning of the programme of study.

The administration fee charged for handling RPEL claims relates to the tutorial support required in preparing the claim. The fee for applications made with the assistance of tutorial support is **£385.00** (fee as at 20.02.13 – this may be subject to change). Cheques should be made payable to 'The University of York'. The fee should be paid when the Full RPEL Application is submitted.

The submission should include:

- a completed full RPEL application form
- a letter of support for the study from your manager
- an up-to-date CV
- your portfolio of evidence
- your payment

The entire submission should be sent to:

Alexandra Bostock (RPL Administrator)
Student Assessment Office
Area 2, Seebohm Rowntree Building
University of York
YO10 5DD

Or alternatively the applicant can contact Alexandra Bostock by email (dohs-rpl@york.ac.uk) to make arrangements to submit the portfolio in person to our Student Information Service counter. This must be arranged in advance prior to submission.

Portfolio Assessment

Applications will be considered by the RPL Committee within **four weeks**. Two members of the RPL Committee and an External Examiner will consider whether the identified learning outcomes have been met and decide if the applicant's previous experiential learning is valid for accreditation of the specified number of credits towards the proposed pathway.

The applicant will be awarded a pass or fail, not a percentage mark. The marking criteria will be the standard departmental theoretical marking criteria. This can be accessed on the student Intranet at: <https://www.york.ac.uk/healthsciences/student-intranet/exam-assess/markgrid/>

The Department will write to the applicant to notifying him/her of the final decision. Applicants may raise a complaint about the RPL process, but do not have a right of appeal against a decision on whether or not they should receive credit.

Portfolios are normally made available to applicants to collect following assessment.