

# Recognition of Prior Learning and Credit Transfer

## Student Guide

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## 1. Recognition of Prior Learning and Credit Transfer at UHI

UHI is committed to widening access to higher education and encourages applications from prospective students who do not have formal entry qualifications. As part of this commitment, UHI supports the principle of recognising prior learning wherever it occurs, provided it can be assessed may be recognised and credit awarded and / or entry to a formal programme of study allowed.

### What does this mean for me as a student?

If you have already taken part in learning, either formal for which you have received a certificate, or informal learning (e.g. work or community based) that you did not receive a certificate for (i.e. it was not a formal course of study), then you could use these to:

- Gaining entry to the first level of a UHI programme (as an alternative to normal entry requirements)
- Gaining **general** SCQF credit – where the amount and level of SCQF credit points must be agreed
- Gaining **specific** credit within a programme for particular modules (whole modules only) or for an entire level – leading to exemption from those modules, so the amount and level of SCQF credit points is automatically agreed.

## 2. So what exactly is RPL?

### Some definitions of the terms used

*These definitions are written by the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and adopted by the Quality Assurance Agency for use by all colleges and universities in Scotland.*

Recognition of Prior [Informal] Learning (RPL): a process which acknowledges, and values publicly, learning which has been achieved outside formal education or training systems. There are two types of RPL:

- 1) RPL for Personal/Career Development or formative assessment: a process of recognising learning achieved outside formal education or training systems within the context of further learning and development. This process can be used to help with confidence-building; identifying individual learning pathways and to help you prepare for the process of RPL for credit.
- 2) RPL for Credit, or summative assessment: a process of assessing learning achieved outside of formal education or training systems which is recognised, if its appropriate, for academic or vocational purposes. This process can help you as an applicant to gain entry to a course of formal learning if the outcomes of their prior informal learning are judged as equivalent to the entry requirements to the course. It may also help you as a student to gain credit within a course if the outcomes of their prior informal learning are judged as equivalent to the outcomes of the course to which they are seeking credit. Credit can be awarded for elements of the course, i.e. full units or modules but not for parts of units or modules.

Credit Transfer or Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL): a process, through which previously assessed and certificated learning is considered and, as appropriate recognised for academic purposes. Applicants may combine an RPL claim with a Credit Transfer claim, in seeking entry to, or credit within, a course of study.

## 3. How much credit can I claim through RPL or Credit Transfer?

UHI places a limit on the amount of RPL you may be credited with for a course of study. In order to ensure the integrity of any UHI programme award, limits on the total amount of specific credit

allowed for entry to a named award with advanced standing are set. In general you can be awarded through RPL a maximum of 50% of the credit points at the level on which you wish to exit with an award up to level SCQF 8.

Certificate of Higher Education	60	Points at SCQF Level 7
Diploma of Higher Education	120 60	Points at SCQF Level 7 Points at SCQF Level 8
Ordinary Degree	120 120 30	Points at SCQF Level 7 Points at SCQF Level 8
Degree with Honours	120 120	Points at SCQF Level 7 Points at SCQF Level 8

*SCQF = Scottish credit and qualifications framework level*

*See Appendix 1 for SCQF qualifications matrix*

In exceptional circumstances, for example where articulation with other external programmes exists, the limits on the amount of credit allowed may differ from above.

### **Can I apply for RPL/Credit Transfer for more than one course?**

Simultaneous double counting of credit for the same module towards more than one UHI award is not permitted. Once credit has been counted towards one award, it cannot be used towards another award. No grading or mark is given to modules from which you gain exemption through RPL. If you apply for credit in the final year of your Honours degree this may impact on the final classification of your award.

## **4. How do I make RPL/Credit Transfer claim?**

The first step is to find out who is the RPL student adviser and make an appointment to speak to them. They will advise you whether your prior learning would be suitable for a claim (although they cannot give an indication on whether your claim will be successful). Then complete the RPL claim form (available from [www.uhi.ac.uk](http://www.uhi.ac.uk)) and hand it to your student advisor.

Applications should be made in advance of the commencement of studies. In circumstances where this is not possible, you may enter the chosen programme on the understanding that if your application for RPL / Credit Transfer is unsuccessful you must complete any modules for which accreditation was not granted.

## **5. The role of your Student Adviser**

Your academic partner has a member of staff who will be able to help you with your RPL or Credit Transfer claim. The adviser ensures that UHI guidance is available to enable you to maximise your potential and effectively gather evidence required to demonstrate learning achieved. The adviser will be able to help with all stages of your claim.

It is the responsibility of the Adviser to ensure that you have a copy of the relevant UHI guidance material and to provide advice and help on:

- the nature of RPL / Credit Transfer
- the credit requirements of the programme including specific learning outcomes for modules
- UHI procedure, including fee structure, limits on the amount of credit that can be claimed and the process of making the RPL or Credit Transfer claim
- formulating a claim in terms of reflecting upon and demonstrating learning the assessment process

- the structure and content of a draft claim. Please note that his/her view on a draft claim does not guarantee the outcome of the assessment process.
- receive and progress a claim
- notify applicants of the assessment decision

## 6. Your responsibilities

If you think you may be eligible for RPL for specific modules in a programme you should approach your student adviser for informal discussion and advice on the RPL process.

With help from your adviser it is your responsibility to prepare and submit your application. These are the things you will need to do:

- make contact with the RPL adviser and obtain the required paperwork (including details of admission requirements/learning outcomes for the module or course)
- identify their existing skills and knowledge
- match their existing learning against the requirements of the module/course.
- collect and collate the evidence to support the claim
- formally submit the claim to the adviser in line within required deadlines
- inform the adviser of any change of contact details
- pay the appropriate fee within required timescales

### Documentation to accompany the claim

To allow UHI to assess the application applicants will need to submit the following documents:

- Any original certificates and academic transcript as evidence for credit transfer
- A portfolio of evidence of learning achieved for RPL
- an SAE for return of the original documents

Once the documents are returned to the applicant it is their responsibility to retain them whilst they are completing their studies with UHI.

## 7. How is my application assessed?

Usually for RPL claims you will gather a portfolio of evidence of previous learning. Whilst this may be appropriate, it may be useful to consider other types of evidence such as:

- 1) Written or recorded spoken Reflective account
- 2) Directed project work
- 3) Requesting assessment on demand
- 4) Observation of practical or simulated event or task
- 5) e-portfolio which might include digital stories, presentations
- 6) A combination of these types of evidence

You and your adviser will discuss the nature of the evidence you are attempting to demonstrate in order to determine the most appropriate method.

Regardless of the method used to present the evidence, it is important to consider how well it relates to your application. You may also want to assess your own prior learning according to these principles, which are also used by those who will in due course assess your claim:

- Acceptability, i.e. the match between evidence you provide and learning outcomes of the modules of the course you are applying to. Is the evidence acceptable in terms of being reliable and valid?
- Sufficiency, i.e. is the evidence presented sufficient to demonstrate the achievements

claimed?

- Authenticity, i.e. can you demonstrate that the evidence is clearly related to your own efforts?
- Currency, i.e. is the learning of current relevance? Has the learning which is being assessed occurred in the last five years? If not, is a good case made for its continuing relevance?

For further information on these types of assessment see:

[www.valex-apel.com](http://www.valex-apel.com). Contains the Valuing Learning from Experience (VALEX) support materials including tutor and student guides.

[www.storycenter.org](http://www.storycenter.org). Contains resources and information on digital story telling.

### **The assessment process**

All applications will be assessed by two members of staff who are subject specialists in the module/unit for which credit is being claimed. Each claim is assessed on an individual basis. The assessors will:

- identify the assessment criteria — based on the learning outcomes
- assess the evidence against the defined criteria
- recommend, record and report the outcome of the assessment process within the required time-scale

The assessment report will make one of the following judgements:

- 1) the level and volume of learning achieved is sufficient for specific credit to be awarded or for admission to a course
- 2) the evidence is incomplete
- 3) the level and volume of the learning achieved is not appropriate

In the case of incomplete evidence (2), you may re-submit a claim only once. The initial assessment decision will be notified to the applicant by the adviser together with guidance and help on any additional information required. Feedback will be provided to you by the RPL adviser who will let you know the outcome of the claim and provide any further guidance if required.

## **8. RPL / Credit Transfer Fees**

The fee payable depends on the type of credit you are requesting:

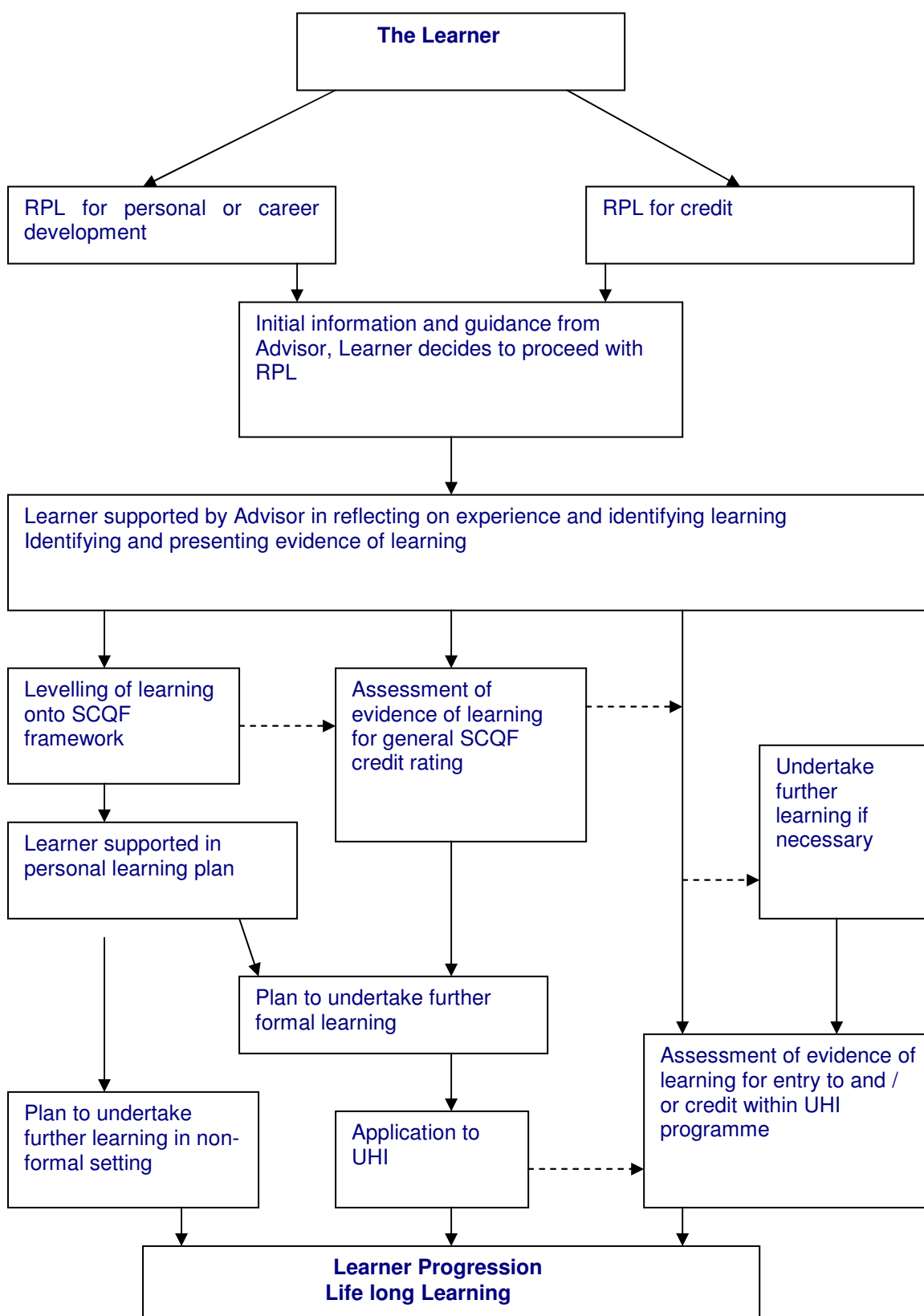
- 1) Credit Transfer as entry with advanced standing. If you have certificates which are sufficient to allow entry a course with advanced standing there is no fee for assessment of the claim.
- 2) Where RPL is for personal development planning and not being assessed for exemption of study, you will receive an initial interview with an adviser free of charge.
- 3) Where RPL is being assessed for exemption from study, you will also receive an initial Adviser interview free of charge. However, UHI charges a fee for the process of advising on and assessing the claim. The fee is payable once you request more detailed advice from the RPL adviser in submitting a claim for assessment. Charges are detailed in the UHI schedule of fees. In certain circumstances UHI may waive RPL assessment fees.

## **9. Appeals against a decision**

There is no appeal regarding the academic decision. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of an application this should be discussed with the RPL Adviser. If the issued is unresolved, the UHI student complaints policy and procedure should be followed. If a registered student wishes to appeal against an RPL claim, the appeal should be made in writing to the RPL Adviser with responsibility for prior learning within the academic partner. Appeals will only be considered where these relate to alleged breaches of procedure. The appeal will be dealt with as laid down in the UHI appeals procedure within the Academic Standards and Quality Regulations.

## Appendix 1: UHI RPL - the learners journey

This flowchart diagram indicates possible RPL routes that applicants may take.



*(source SCQF core principles and key features 2005)*

## Appendix 2: Matrix of SCQF qualifications framework

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Table					
SCQF Level	SQA Qualifications			Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions	Scottish Vocational Qualifications
12			↑	Doctoral Degree	
11			↑	Masters Degree PG Diploma or Certificate	SVQ 5
10			↑	Honours Degree	
9			Professional Development Award	Ordinary Degree	SVQ 4
8		Higher National Diploma	↓	Diploma of HE	
7	Advanced Higher	Higher National Certificate	↓	Certificate of HE	SVQ 3
6	Higher	↑	↑		
5	Intermediate 2 / Credit Standard Grade	↑	↑		SVQ 2
4	Intermediate 1 / General Standard Grade	National Certificate	National Progression Award		SVQ 1
3	Access 3 / Foundation Standard Grade	↓	↓		
2	Access 2	↓	↓		
1	Access 1				

Source: SCQF 2007