

The London Interdisciplinary School

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy

Introduction

This policy sets out how the School recognises prior learning, either in exempting candidates from admissions criteria, or in exempting students from a module or stage of the programme.

Definitions

The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the use of learning for the purposes of granting

- Equivalence with and therefore exemption from admissions criteria; or
- Exemptions from a module or stage of a programme.

There are two main categories of Prior Learning:

- Prior certificated learning—the use for either of the above purposes of any learning for which the applicant has (or will be) awarded a recognised qualification;
- Prior experiential learning—the use for either of the above purposes of any skills and knowledge which is gained through relevant experience, which is capable of being evaluated but for which no formal qualification which is acquired

Applicants may seek recognition of prior learning for one or more purposes, in and in one or both prior learning categories.

Principles

RPL applications for the purposes of gaining exemption from admissions criteria shall be considered prior to the consideration of the full application.

RPL applications for the purposes of module or programme stage exemption will only be considered following the applicant being offered a place on a programme.

It is the achievement of learning, or the outcomes of learning, and not just the experience of activities that is being accredited, and in all cases evidence must be presented to the School that such learning has taken place. Exemptions will only be granted on the basis of evidence of relevant learning, and not experience alone.

Evidence for acceptance of RPL should demonstrate that the learner has a reasonable expectation of satisfactorily completing the programme for which they are applying.

Decisions to award specific credit and therefore to exempt a student from a module or programme stage will be based on the identification, description and assessment of equivalence to RPL learning outcomes to the specified module or programme stage learning outcomes.

Judgment about the equivalence of prior certificated learning or prior experiential learning to admissions criteria, module, or stage outcomes will take into account the principles of relevance, level, authenticity, currency and sufficiency.

A student may be awarded recognition for prior learning (certificated or experiential) towards the requirements of an award up to two-thirds of the total credit requirement of that award.

Recognition for prior learning (certificated or experiential) is not permitted at Level 6 (Year 3) of the programme, where students are expected to complete 120 credits in order to gain the award.

Students and applicants will be assessed with equality and fairness, and there shall be transparency in all processes and decisions.

Responsibilities

The Learning Director, or their nominee, is responsible for determining whether a student may be exempt from a module or stage of a programme given prior certificated and/or experiential learning.

The Recruitment and Admissions Director, or their nominee, is responsible for determining whether a candidate should gain exemption from admissions criteria given prior certificated and/or experiential learning.

Procedure for applying for RPL exemption from programme module(s)/stages

Prior certificated learning

Applications for gaining RPL exemptions for a module or stage of a School programme should, wherever possible, be submitted at the same time as the application for a place on the programme of study. Guidance on how to apply for RPL is available on the School's website.

Where a student is applying for RPL on the basis of prior certificated learning, the student must include as part of their application relevant certificated copies of any certificates and curriculum information. Any document that is not in English must be accompanied by a certified translation. All documents will be returned to the student once the RPL evaluation process has been completed.

The evidence submitted by the student must be relevant to the programme module or stage; it must show that the prior certificated learning is at the same level as the relevant module or stage; it must be verifiable and clearly related to the student's own efforts; the learning shown must be current (I.e., not more than five years out of date); and together the evidence must be sufficient to substantiate the claim for credit.

The Learning Director should consider the prior certificated learning and decide, in the best interests of the student, how this can be taken into account. It is at the discretion of the Learning Director to decide if: (a) the student content, and therefore knowledge gained, is sufficiently similar for a student to be exempt from module(s), and (b) if marks can be transferred.

Students who have previously been required to withdraw from a programme will not normally be re-admitted to the same point on a programme by the recognition of the prior learning.

Prior experiential learning

Where a student is applying for an RPL exemption from a module or programme stage on the basis of prior experiential learning, the student must include as part of their application a portfolio which:

- Describes in detail the prior learning or experience;
- Describes how the prior learning or experience gained is relevant to the credit or exemption applied for;
- Describes how the prior learning or experience gained has achieved the learning outcome(s) and the objectives of the module(s) concerned;
- Provides satisfactory evidence of the prior learning or experience. This may include:
 - Examples of work undertaken;
 - Reflective accounts of learning;
 - Videos of performance;
 - Testimony of employer, colleagues, clients;
 - Narrative account of learning gained.

The evidence provided by the student must show that the student's experience is relevant to the programme of study and that it is the same level as the taught module or programme stage. It must be verifiable and clearly related to the student's own efforts; the experience gained must be current and not more than five years out of date; and altogether, the evidence must be sufficient to substantiate the claim for credit.

The Learning Director should consider each case and decide from which modules, if any, the student can be exempt. The Learning Director should satisfy him/herself that the student has sufficient knowledge and ability to have a reasonable expectation of completing the programme successfully. The Learning Director may require the student to undergo a direct assessment to determine whether the student has achieved the required learning outcomes, either by requiring the student to undertake the normal progression assessments of the module or programme stage, or by some other appropriate form of assessment.

Decision

A decision by the Learning Director on any exemption from a programme module or stage will only be made once the candidate has been offered a place, and will be communicated to the candidate separately from the offer letter.

Where module or programme stage exemptions are granted, the notification sent to the student will include a clear statement of the extent of the credit that has been given and details of the specific modules from which the student is exempt. The student will be advised of the implications for progression and the classification or grade of a qualification (if any).

Where module or programme stage exemptions are rejected, the student will be provided with clear reasons for the decision and notification of the appeals process.

All decisions will be communicated to the Registrar, who will record details on the student record system, and to the relevant Board of Examiners.

Modules accredited on the basis of prior learning will be indicated as such on a student's transcript.

Procedure for applying for RPL exemption from admissions criteria

An application for RPL exemption from admissions criteria must be made in writing (by letter or email) to the Recruitment and Admissions Director, within the deadline for general admissions applications.

Applicants may be required to produce a portfolio of evidence of learning, where this is not sufficiently clear from their initial written applications for RPL exemption.

Applicants will receive a decision in writing, or a request for further information or evidence.

All decisions will be recorded on the student record system.

Appeals

Applicants have the right to appeal a decision on RPL only on the following grounds:

- The published RPL procedure has not been followed; or
- There is good reason to believe that the submitted evidence of prior learning has not been fully recognised.

New or additional evidence not submitted with the original RPL application will not be considered.

Appeals against RPL decisions relating to an exemption from a module(s) or programme stage should be submitted in accordance with the School's Academic Appeals Procedure. Where an appeal relates to an exemption from admissions criteria, it should be submitted in accordance with the Applicant Complaints and Appeals Procedure.

Fees

Fees may be charged per module for the administration of RPL applications for module or programme exemptions. No fee will normally be charged for consideration of RPL applications for exemption from admissions criteria.

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