

Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and Procedure

A. Introduction

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

It has been developed in alignment with the [QAA Quality Code for Higher Education \(2018\)](#), and the [Quality Code \(2013; Part B: Assuring and Enhancing Academic Quality, Chapter B6 – Assessment of Students and Recognition of Prior Learning\)](#).

The School recognises that learning may take place in a wide variety of contexts, including via formal taught courses, self-directed study and professional or life experience. This Policy and Procedure is designed to facilitate formal recognition of learning undertaken elsewhere, supporting LIS's aim to widen participation and promote equality, diversity and inclusion.

However, given the uniqueness of LIS's interdisciplinary, problem-centred programme, the scope for recognition of prior learning in terms of exemption from programme modules is necessarily limited. The School will not normally approve stage exemption, and a student may only be awarded recognition of prior learning for between 20 and 90 credits of the total credit requirement of the programme (which is 360 credits).

As is set out in the School's [Admissions Regulations and Procedures](#), LIS has a unique admissions process:

- Open to all academic attainment backgrounds (all subject backgrounds, no minimum grade requirements);
- All academic attainment viewed in context of the applicant's educational, familial and personal background;
- Intensive admissions Selection Day focused on understanding candidate mindsets and potential.

Given this unique admissions process, its focus on measuring potential, and its intensive, tailored admissions screening process at Selection Day, the instances of applicants gaining exemption from admissions criteria are likely to be rare. However, applicants who have already completed modules, stages or degrees at other higher education institutions may be granted exemption from aspects of Selection Day (such as the case studies) where the Director of Teaching and Learning determines that their application shows significant academic potential.

B. Definitions

The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for the purposes of this Policy and Procedure is the use of learning for the purposes of granting:

- Equivalence with and therefore exemption from admissions criteria; or

- Exemptions from a module or module(s) of the School's 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 is acquired.

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

C. Related Policies and Procedures

This Policy has been written in line with the School's [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#) and the [Admissions Regulations and Procedures](#).

Applicants for RPL exemption from a module or modules of the School's programme should consult the School's Programme Specification and Student Handbook.

D. Principles

The School's Policy and Procedure on the Recognition of Prior Learning must be explicit, transparent, and accessible to all intended audience (students, prospective students, and staff).

Students who are able to demonstrate that:

- They have already fulfilled the learning outcomes of a module or modules of the School's programme by means other than attendance of the programme; *and*
- They will be able, by completing the remaining requirements, to fulfil the learning outcomes of the programme and attain the standard required for the award;

may be admitted to the programme with an exemption from one or more modules. The maximum number of credits a student may be exempted from is 90 across Levels 4 and 5.

RPL applications for the purposes of gaining exemption from admissions criteria shall be considered alongside the consideration of the full application. It should be noted that, given the School's unique admissions criteria, as set out in its [Admissions Regulations and Procedures](#), and given its intensive, tailored admissions screening via its Selection Day, the instances of applicants gaining exemption from admissions criteria are likely to be rare.

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

Given the uniqueness of LIS's interdisciplinary, problem-based programme and associated learning outcomes, the School will allow exemption from a programme stage.

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 School's programme.

Decisions to award specific credit and therefore to exempt a student from a module or modules 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 modules 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) for:

- A minimum of 15 credits;
- A maximum of 90 credits of the total credit requirement of that award (which is 360 credits for the School's three-year Bachelor of Arts and Sciences programme).

Whilst credit may be transferred under this Policy and Procedure, marks may not be transferred.

Recognition for prior learning (certificated or experiential) is not permitted at Level 6 (Year 3) of the Schools Bachelor's programme.

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

E. Responsibilities

The Director of Teaching and Learning is responsible for determining whether a student may be exempt from a module of a programme given prior certificated and/or experiential learning. This decision, together with supporting evidence, shall be recorded and logged with the Registrar.

The Director of Teaching and Learning is also responsible for determining whether a candidate should gain exemption from admissions criteria given prior certificated and/or experiential learning.

The Registrar is responsible to keeping a secure record of any RPL decisions, ensuring this record is held in line with the School's [Data Protection Policy](#) and [Data Retention Policy](#).

F. Applying for RPL exemption from modules

Procedure

Applications for gaining RPL exemptions for a module(s) of a School programme should, wherever possible, be submitted at the same time as the application for a place on the programme of study. At the very latest, applications for gaining RPL exemptions for a module(s) within an academic year of a School programme must be submitted within the period of registration for that academic year. The timelines for registration are set out in the School's [Registration Policy](#).

Applications for RPL exemptions from the School's module(s) should be sent by email to the Director of Teaching and Learning (learningdirector@t-lis.org).

The email application must set out:

- Name of student;
- If the student is registered, student identification number;
- If the student is not yet registered, cohort applied for and status of application to the programme;
- Module(s) from which the student wishes to be exempted.

Where a student is applying for RPL on the basis of **prior certificated learning**, the student must include in their application:

- Description of how prior certificated learning is relevant to the credit or exemption applied for;
- Evidence that prior certificated learning delivered learning outcomes relevant to the module(s) which the student wishes to be exempted from, including certificated copies of any relevant certificates (certificate, transcript) and curriculum information;
- Evidence that the prior certificated learning is at the same level as the relevant module(s);
- Evidence of prior certificated learning must be:
 - Relevant to the programme module(s);
 - At the same level as the relevant module(s);
 - Verifiable and clearly related to the student's own efforts;
 - Current (no more than 5 years out of date);
 - Sufficient to substantiate the claim for credit.
- Where the evidence is not in English, it must be accompanied by a certified translation.

All documents will be returned to the student once the RPL evaluation process has been completed.

Where a student is applying for RPL on the basis of **prior experiential learning**, the student must include in their written application:

- Detailed description of the prior learning or experience;
- Description of how the prior learning or experience gained is relevant to the module(s) from which the student wishes to be exempted;
- Description of how the prior learning or experience gained has achieved the learning outcome(s) and the objectives of the module(s) concerned;
- 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.
- Evidence of prior experiential learning must be:
 - Relevant to the programme module(s);
 - At the same level as the relevant module(s);
 - Verifiable and clearly related to the student's own efforts;
 - Current (no more than 5 years out of date);
 - Sufficient to substantiate the claim for credit.

Consideration of prior learning

Prior certificated learning

The Director of Teaching and Learning 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 Director of Teaching and Learning, in liaison with the relevant Module Leader(s), to decide if the student content, and therefore knowledge gained, is sufficiently similar to the learning outcomes of the School's programme module(s) for the student to be exempt from those module(s).

Prior experiential learning

The Director of Teaching and Learning should consider each case of prior experiential learning and decide from which modules, if any, the student can be exempt. The Director of Teaching and Learning should satisfy him/herself that:

- a. The student has attained the relevant learning outcomes for the module(s) from which they wish to be exempt, and can therefore be credited with those modules;
- b. The student has sufficient knowledge and ability to have a reasonable expectation of completing the programme successfully.

The Director of Teaching and Learning 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(s), or by some other appropriate form of assessment, which may include a structured interview, completion of a piece of work accompanied by a reflection account of the learning achieved, or a performance-based assessment.

Principles of decision-making

Decisions regarding the recognition of prior learning are a matter of academic judgement about relevant knowledge, understanding and application at an agreed academic standard. Any judgment about the equivalence of prior certificated learning or prior experiential learning to a programme module or modules will take into account the module learning outcomes and the principles of:

Relevance	<i>Is there an appropriate match between the evidence presented and the prior learning that the applicant or student is seeking to demonstrate? Is the prior learning specific? Can it be identified and categorised? Was the learning in a context understood by the learner?</i>
Sufficiency	<i>Is there sufficient evidence to demonstrate full achievement of the learning claimed?</i>
Authenticity	<i>Is the evidence valid and reliable? Does it clearly relate to the applicant or student's own efforts and achievements?</i>
Currency	<i>Does the evidence relate to current learning? Does it meet course validation and/or PSRB time limits in terms of currency of prior learning?</i>
Level	<i>Is the prior learning at a level that is at least equivalent to the relevant element of the programme of study for which the applicant or student is seeking exemption?</i>

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

Decision

Where an applicant has applied for an exemption from a module or modules at the point of application, a decision by the Director of Teaching and Learning will only be made once the candidate has been offered a place. In this case, any decision relating to RPL will be

communicated to the applicant in writing separately from the offer letter, with reasons given for the decision.

Where a student has applied for exemption from a module or modules within the registration deadlines for an academic year, the Director of Teaching and Learning will return a written decision to the student within fifteen working days of the application being received.

Where module or modules exemptions are granted, the notification sent to the applicant or 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 applicant or student will be advised of the implications for progression and the classification or grade of a qualification (if any).

Where module exemptions are rejected, the applicant or 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;
- Record details for review by the Board of Examiners for the programme.

Recording outcomes

Modules accredited on the basis of prior learning will be indicated as such on a student's transcript (RPL), with both level and volume of credit.

Where credit is awarded/transferred for prior learning against module(s) this is not graded and RPL is recorded as a pass.

Data records on recognition of prior learning applications and decisions will be retained in line with the School's [Data Protection Policy](#), [Data Retention Policy](#) and [Detailed Data Retention Schedule](#).

Direct Entry via Stage Exemption

Given the uniqueness of LIS's interdisciplinary, problem-based programme and associated learning outcomes, the School will not approve programme stage exemption.

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.

G. Applying for RPL exemption from admissions criteria

An application for RPL exemption from admissions criteria must be made by email to the Director of Teaching and Learning (learningdirector@t-lis.org), within the deadline for general admissions applications as set out in the School's [Admissions Regulations and Procedures](#). As noted above, given the School's unique admissions criteria and process,

approval of RPL exemption from admissions criteria is likely to be rare. However, applicants who have already completed modules, stages or degrees at other higher education institutions may be granted exemption from aspects of Selection Day (such as the case studies) where the Director of Teaching and Learning determines that their application shows significant academic potential.

The application must set out:

- Name of student;
- Cohort applied for;
- Admissions criteria from which the applicant wishes to be exempted, with reference to the School's [Admissions Regulations and Procedures](#);
- Detailed description of relevant prior certificated learning or prior experiential learning;
- Description of how prior certificated learning or prior experiential learning is relevant to the admissions criteria exemption applied for;
- Evidence of the prior certification learning or prior experiential learning, for example:
 - Certified copies of any relevant certificates;
 - Examples of work undertaken;
 - Reflective accounts of learning;
 - Videos of performance;
 - Testimony of employer, colleagues, clients;
 - Narrative account of learning gained.
- Evidence of prior certificated learning or prior experiential learning must be:
 - Relevant to the admissions criteria, and sufficient to meet these criteria;
 - Verifiable and clearly related to the student's own efforts;
 - Current (no more than 5 years out of date).
 - Where the evidence is not in English, it must be accompanied by a certified translation.

All documents will be returned to the student once the RPL evaluation process has been completed.

RPL applications for the purposes of gaining exemption from admissions criteria shall be considered by the School's Director of Teaching and Learning prior to the consideration of the applicant's full application.

Applicants may receive a written request for further information or evidence where there is insufficient information or evidence for the School to make a decision in the first instance. Applicants will receive a decision in writing within fifteen working days of the application deadline, including reasons for rejection or acceptance of the application for RPL.

Decisions will be recorded on the Student Record System, and all related personal data will be retained in line with the School's [Data Protection Policy](#), [Data Retention Policy](#), and [Detailed Data Retention Schedule](#).

H. Appeals

Applicants for RPL 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) 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](#).

I. Fees

There will be no tuition fee refunds for modules exempted under this RPL Policy, nor will there be any charges associated with RPL applications.

J. Review and Monitoring

The Director of Teaching and Learning will report annually to the Academic Council on cases where the RPL Policy and Procedure was applied. S/he will also review this Policy and Procedure's effectiveness and recommend any changes; changes will be authorised by the Academic Council.

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Related documents: (e.g. associated forms, underpinning processes, related policies or overarching policies)	Academic Framework Assessment and Classification Framework Admissions Regulations and Procedures Applicant Complaints and Appeals Procedure Academic Appeals Procedure Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy Data Protection Policy Data Retention Policy Detailed Data Retention Schedule Registration Policy

Version Control			
Version	Author	Date	Brief summary of changes

1	Hannah Kohler (Director of Admissions and Student Support)	20/02/2019	Original draft
2	Jasper Joyce (Director of Finance and Operations)	13/03/2019	Adjustments to wording
3	Hannah Kohler (Director of Admissions and Student Support)	10/06/2019	Stipulation that Stage Exemption is not normally approved by the School given the uniqueness of the Programme. Director of Teaching and Learning specified as responsible for exemptions from admissions criteria; clarification that RPL for admissions criteria are likely to be rare give LIS's unique admissions criteria and process; increased detail on procedure for applying for RPL and way decisions are made; specification of minimum and maximum credits for module exemption under this Policy
4	Prof. Chris Maguire (Registrar)	14/06/2019	Adjustments to wording
5	Prof. Carl Gombrich (Director of Teaching and Learning)	17/06/2019	Specification that applicants who have done degrees or parts of degrees elsewhere may be exempted from admissions criteria
6	Hannah Kohler (Director of Admissions and Student Support)	10/08/2019	Minor wording changes

7	Hannah Kohler (Director of Admissions and Student Support)	13/11/2019	Added timelines for decision making. Clarified policy on transfer of mark
8	Academic Council	18/12/2019	Requires review as part of overall update of general academic regulations in light of decision to pursue NDAPs
9	Hannah Kohler (Director of Admissions and Student Support)	15/02/2020	Removal of any mention of stage exemption
10	Academic Council	16/03/2020	Approved – minimum RPL requirement altered to 15 credits to align with Academic Framework and correction of typos

