

London's
International
Drama School

**Rose
Bruford
College**

of Theatre
& Performance

Recognising Prior Learning

POLICIES and
PROCEDURES

RECOGNISING PRIOR LEARNING

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Section A: Policy

1.0 Introduction and scope of this policy

The College understands that learning may take place in a wide variety of contexts, both formal and informal, and that the skills and knowledge obtained from previous learning experiences may provide the foundation on which you can build through participation in a programme of study at Rose Bruford College. This document sets out the policy and procedures by which the College assesses and recognises such prior learning and awards credit for that learning. It applies to:

- initial entry onto a programme of study;
- entry onto a programme at a study point subsequent to initial entry (advanced standing);
- recognition of prior learning that will count towards credit for an award.

It is designed to ensure that all decisions relating to recognising prior learning are made fairly and equitably.

2.0 Terminology

The terminology used in this policy is set out below:

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

The term 'recognition' - which reflects the terminology in many European countries – is used to describe the process whereby applicants of all ages and backgrounds are eligible to receive recognition and formal credit for learning acquired in the past through formal study and through work and other life experiences.

RPL has two widely recognised forms: prior experiential (or informal) learning, and prior certificated learning.

The College aligns itself with the QAA's UK Quality Code for HE (May 2018) Advice and Guidance: Admissions, Recruitment and Widening Access; Assessment.

Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)

Prior Experiential Learning denotes learning derived from experience which is uncertificated and not previously assessed. For example, learning from unpaid work or paid work, community activities, leisure pursuits and other informal learning experiences.

Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL)

Prior Certificated Learning is learning that has previously been assessed in a formal learning environment, e.g. learning arising from academic and professional awards, for example Higher National Diplomas, Foundation Degrees, National Vocational Qualifications and other courses at an appropriate level.

Certificated learning does not have to be credit-based, and most colleges and Universities have a mechanism for gauging the credit value of certificated learning, from the UK and elsewhere.

Advanced Standing

The authority for a student to commence a programme of study with credit granted for components of the programme already achieved in recognition of previously completed studies and/or prior learning.

Articulation

Whereby all students who satisfy academic criteria on one programme are automatically entitled on academic grounds to be admitted with advanced standing to a subsequent stage of a programme. More information can be found in the Collaborative Handbook.

3.0 General Principles

The general principle is that in the case of non-RBC credit, RPL may be granted by the College for:

- Up to a maximum of one half of an undergraduate programme (180 credits). For example, for degrees comprising 360 credits, RPL would be granted for no more than 180 credits.
- Up to a maximum of one third of a Masters' programme (60 credits)
- Up to a maximum of one third of a one-year programme

Any decisions for programmes to allow RPL outside of the limitations noted above, must be approved by Academic Board.

RPL is an applicant/student led activity. To qualify for an award, all students must be treated equitably regardless of the source of learning which is being assessed.

Credit must be given only for demonstrated learning, where equivalence of learning outcomes can be demonstrated, and not for experience alone. Learning must also be of an equivalent level and volume.

RPL may be considered for any modules within the taught components of level 4 or 5 of an undergraduate programme and for any modules other than the final independent project of a Masters programme.

All students, including those seeking to demonstrate equivalence to modules on the basis of prior learning, must meet the learning outcomes for the programme as set out in the programme specification, either through studying the programme and/or through RPL, in order to qualify for an award.

The RPL regulations apply to prior learning from another institution or from RBC programmes. If RPCL is used, mechanisms must be in place to record declarations by students that the credit presented has not been used for a previous claim.

The use of RPL does not alter the admission criteria for a programme, including the relevant benchmark entry criteria. Where applicable, applicants/students will also need to continue to meet the criteria required of the United Kingdom Visa and Immigration Service.

A module or modules to which credit is granted for prior learning will not be awarded a mark but will be graded pass. As a result the module will be excluded from the calculation of the overall mark for the level.

In the case of an RBC award having been made (e.g. students having been awarded a Post Graduate Certificate and left, but now wishing to proceed to a Post Graduate Diploma) the same credit cannot be counted twice in the same discipline/subject and the original award will be rescinded.

The College must make it clear in publicity materials whether it accepts students on the basis of RPL, and must also include information as to where prospective students can obtain advice and guidance about making a claim, any fees payable and time limits for any learning which they wish to be considered.

4.0 Criteria for assessing prior learning

Decisions regarding RPL are considered by a panel consisting of:

The Programme Director/Academic Programme Manager and/or relevant Head of School

The College Registrar

The Head of Quality

Prior learning that is certificated will be accredited by scrutiny of documentary evidence against the required criteria of level, volume and achievement of relevant intended learning outcomes. Prior learning that is experiential must be recognised by the compilation of material that allows equivalent scrutiny. In either case a fee will be payable, which may depend on the level and volume of credit to be recognised and on whether the learning is certificated or experiential.

To ensure fairness and parity in assessing prior learning, the following criteria [adapted from the QAA's UK Quality Code for HE (May 2018)], will be applied to all applications:

- i. **Acceptability:** the extent to which the learning equates in value with the form, structure, processes and learning outcomes of the programme and/or module intended learning outcomes for which credit is being claimed;
- ii. **Sufficiency:** the extent to which the evidence demonstrates the achievement claimed;
- iii. **Authenticity:** the extent to which the evidence demonstrates that learning actually occurred and was undertaken by the applicant
- iv. **Currency:** the extent to which the evidence relates to current learning. Normally the learning must have taken place within 5 years of an application for recognition of prior learning being submitted. Where the learning took place outside this 5-year limit, evidence of updating of knowledge is required. In the case of experiential learning claims, learning outside of this time limit

may be considered where an applicant is able to demonstrate evidence of continuous application, updating and relevance to their practice.

5.0 Required evidence

5.1 Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning

Certified prior learning must be evidenced by copies of qualifications, transcripts, detailed programme outlines indicating subjects studied, assessments undertaken and references from relevant academic staff at the institution(s) in which the learning took place. These should indicate the equivalent number of credits and the level of study.

5.2 Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning

The Programme Director/Academic Programme Manager will be able to advise you of the exact format of evidence you will need to submit in support of a claim. This will be appropriate to the programme element(s) to which the claim relates. Possible formats include: written reports or essays, a portfolio of visual work, oral testing, viva voce or presentations, observation of performances etc. It may also include references from employers.

Section B: Procedures

6.0 Applying for recognition of prior learning

Applications for the recognition of prior learning must be made in writing on either an *Application for Recognition of Prior Certified Learning Form* or an *Application for Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning Form*. It is important that students use the correct form which also has instructions on how the form should be completed.

Completed forms and supporting evidence must be submitted to the Admissions Department, who will forward them to the relevant staff for consideration. Claims for RPL must be submitted within 8 weeks of registration

Admissions will inform the student of the decision in writing within **fifteen working days of the application being received**.

Programmes will provide students with advice and support when seeking RPL, including information on the types of evidence considered acceptable and the extent of evidence required. However, advice from staff does not guarantee that the claim will be successful at the formal assessment stage. Additional advice may be needed for students for whom English is not their first language.

A charge will be levied for consideration of RPL and will be clearly stated in publicity material and communicated to applicants prior to submission of evidence. The College

may waive fees in certain circumstances; in particular students seeking credit gained from another programme at the College.

7.0 Appealing decisions relating to recognition of prior learning

The stages of the Procedure set out above have been established to ensure full and fair consideration of applications for the recognition of prior learning. If, however, you believe that your application has not been handled properly or fairly in accordance with this Procedure you may submit a letter to the Registrar appealing the decision.

7.1 Making an appeal

Students have the right to request a review of the conduct of the process for considering an RPL application. However, there is no appeal against the final decision as this is a matter of academic judgement.

Appeals can therefore only be based on material administrative error, regulatory irregularity, other material irregularity, or if any additional evidence is available that was not available at the time of the original complaint.

Your appeal will be considered by an **Appeals Panel**, composed of the following (or their nominees):

- Vice Principal
- Head of the School not involved in the original application for RPL
- Head of Quality (who will also act as secretary)

The Appeals Panel will meet within **20 working days** of receiving the notice of appeal.

The Appeals Panel may:

- i. Uphold the appeal and award credit up to the maximum credit permissible under the academic regulations and this policy;
- ii. Uphold the appeal and award credit for some, but not all of the Prior Learning for which you applied;
- iii. Dismiss the appeal and uphold the original decision.

You will be notified of the decision of the Appeals Panel in writing, within **five working days** of its meeting and issued with a Completion of Procedures letter.

Should you still be dissatisfied with the decision of the appeal panel, you may be able to complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) if the complaint is eligible under its rules and once all internal procedures have been concluded.

Information about the role of the OIA and the procedure for submitting complaints can be obtained from the OIA website: www.oiahe.org.uk

DOCUMENT CONTROL BOX		Version 1.1
Policy / Procedure title:	Recognising Prior Learning	
Policy owner:	Registrar	
Lead contact:	Head of Quality	
Audience:	Prospective students/all students/staff	
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Approving body:	LQSC	
Date approved:	To be completed	
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Supersedes/complements	Principles of Assessment Document	
Previous review dates:		
Next review date:	July 2018	
Related Statutes, Ordinances, General Regulations	Academic Regulations	
Related Policies, Procedures and Guidance:	Application for RPEL Form Application for RPCL Form	
Further information: Minor revisions to section 4. Updated August 2018 to take account of new academic structure in DMTA Reference to QAA's Quality Code amended.		