

UCS Accreditation and Recognition of Prior Learning / Prior Experience Policy

Excellence

Our Mission

Raising Aspirations, Unlocking Potential, Advancing Futures

Our Values

Excellence, Passion, Teamwork, Integrity, Innovation,
Sustainability, Valuing Others and Supportiveness

Sparsholt College Group

The Sparsholt College Group includes Sparsholt College, Andover College, University Centre Sparsholt, Sparsholt College Services, Westley Enterprises and Andover Town Football Club. Policies apply to each part of the Sparsholt College Group unless specified otherwise.

The UCS Accreditation and Recognition of Prior Learning and Prior Experience Policy was approved by the Board of Governors in July 2024 and supersedes previous versions.

Originator:	Vice Principal & Dean of Higher Education
Located:	College Group websites College Group intranet
Due for review:	May for July 2027

UCS ACCREDITATION AND RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING / PRIOR EXPERIENCE POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The University Centre Sparsholt (UCS) has delegated authority for admissions granted by the University of Portsmouth. As an associate college of the University of Portsmouth (UoP), this policy mirrors the UoP policy with minor changes to reflect organisational and structural differences between the two organisations. UCS is committed to the principle that relevant learning, wherever it occurs, can be recognised in an appropriate way within its academic provision at all levels.
- 1.2. UCS may establish agreements with other organisations, through Memoranda of Agreement, to grant RPL to applicants who have obtained certain qualifications or undertaken specified periods of study. These agreements reflect that RPL has already been agreed for these applicants and does not need to be applied for again.
- 1.3. Where a course is a top-up course, the admissions requirement shall be deemed to be equivalent of the relevant amount of RPL.
- 1.4. This policy seeks to recognise other relevant learning through one of three methods:
 - Credit transfer;
 - Prior certificated learning;
 - Prior experiential learning.
- 1.5. Credit transfer refers to the consideration of credits or qualifications that have been awarded by a UK higher education degree awarding body.
- 1.6. Prior certificated learning is the consideration of learning which is at a higher education level but for which the applicant has not previously been awarded credits or a qualification positioned on the [Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies](#). This credits or qualifications awarded by a non-UK higher education degree awarding body.
- 1.7. Prior experiential learning considers learning that has been gained through experience; this does not entail consideration of the experience itself.
- 1.8. All the different methods of learning recognised through this policy come under the title of RPL. Applicants are not limited to applying for only one sort of RPL and may apply for as many types as are relevant to their prior learning.
- 1.9. The UCS operates a Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme (CATS) and all applications for RPL will be considered against this. Where the UCS recognises relevant learning, the learning will be allocated an appropriate number of credits for the programmes.
- 1.10. RPL uses the award of credit to recognise prior learning but will not allocate any mark to these modules, nor will they be used in calculating any classification of a University of Portsmouth award. Where a Board of Examiners feels that a student may be disadvantaged due to the inclusion of RPL, they may exercise discretion to make a higher classification of award.
- 1.11. An applicant can use credit transfer to obtain credits towards an exit award where those credits have already been previously used to obtain an award at an equivalent, higher or lower level of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications. However, an applicant may not use credit transfer to repeat the same award to improve their classification.

2. APPROVED LIST OF EXISTING RPL

- 2.1. Where a claim for RPL is agreed for an applicant as part of the RPL process, it will be possible to agree this claim for future applicants with the same qualification against a specified course for a 3 years. The details will be held by the UCS Admission team and all further applications that match the application for recognition of prior learning, can be agreed by the RPL Advisor (normally the relevant subject lead) without having to follow the full process. Agreement by the RPL Advisor will constitute approval of these claims.
- 2.2 All RPL details held for future use should be reviewed every 3 years.

3. LIMITS ON RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

- 3.1. The total of specific credit allowed for RPL may not exceed two thirds of the credit value of the course. Approved regulations for a named award may, exceptionally, specify higher or lower limits. Any such exceptions are subject to the normal exemption procedures.

4. APPLICATION FOR RPL

- 4.1. Applications for RPL should in the first instance be directed to the UCS admission team (degrees@sparsholt.ac.uk). They will then send the applicant the relevant RPL claim form and guidance notes on receipt of their application.
- 4.2 If an applicant wishes to use RPL to start as a direct entrant on to a stage of the course other than the first, they must apply for RPL before the first day of teaching in the academic year in which they wish to make their claim. Applicants cannot apply for RPL for an entire stage once the academic year has begun.
- 4.3 If an applicant wishes to use RPL to gain credit for some but not all modules on a stage of the course, they must apply for RPL within ten working days of the first day of teaching in the academic year in which they wish to make their claim. RPL cannot be applied for after ten working days from the first day of teaching.
- 4.4 The admission team will undertake an initial check to ensure that the RPL form has been completed correctly. If the RPL form has been completed incorrectly, they will contact the applicant to advise on the correct completion of the form. The complete and correct RPL form will be sent to the RPL Advisor (normally the relevant subject lead). The UAC will indicate to the RPL Advisor the signatures that will be required, which will normally be both the RPL Advisor and RPL Assessor (normally the UoP Academic Contact/Dean of HE). If the RPL falls under the categories laid out in 2.1 above, only the signature of the RPL Advisor will be required.
- 4.5. When considering RPL, the evidence must be linked to the learning outcomes expected, be at an appropriate level and of an appropriate volume. The University will evaluate:
 - the relevance of the evidence presented – whether there is an appropriate match between the evidence presented and the learning claimed; and
 - the sufficiency of the evidence presented – whether there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate the achievement of the learning claimed; and
 - the authenticity of the evidence presented – whether the evidence relates to the applicant's own efforts and achievements; and
 - the currency of the evidence presented – whether the evidence relates to current learning.
- 4.6. The claim form provides a formal record of the decision made and will be used in the student's department to:
 - Update the student's record on both on ProSolution and on the UoP system, SITS;

- Form part of the relevant range of evidence (e.g. portfolio, transcript) which is retained for a sufficient time to allow scrutiny by External Examiner(s);
 - Offer evidence of good practice on a sample basis to AD(A)s, external auditors and/or assessors.
- 4.7. Applicants with credits or qualifications that have been awarded by a UK higher education degree awarding body, which are directly related to the course that they are applying to study and have been awarded within the last five years, should provide their transcript and any certificate together with an outline of the syllabus to the UAC.
- 4.8. Applicants with other certificated learning gained within the last five years, which is directly related to the course that they are applying to study and has been awarded within the last five years, should provide their certificate and an outline of the syllabus to the UCS admission team who will copy and store the information for the required period set out in the retention policy.
- 4.9. Applicants who wish to apply for RPL under **4.7** or **4.8** above should complete the RPL form for certificated learning available via email from degrees@sparsholt.ac.uk
- 4.10. Applicants who wish to submit evidence under **4.7** and **4.8** that is older than five years should provide appropriate additional evidence to demonstrate the continued currency of the learning such as working in an appropriate role since gaining the original qualification.
- 4.11. Applicants who wish to claim for recognition of prior experiential learning must submit a portfolio of evidence, or equivalent, to the UCS admissions team at degrees@sparsholt.ac.uk. Applicants should have previously contacted the UCS admissions team in order to discuss the format of the portfolio and the evidence to be considered. This may include an essay or other appropriate assessment tool. Applicants who wish to apply either for experiential RPL only or for experiential RPL together with certificated learning should use the application form available via email from degrees@sparsholt.ac.uk

5. STAGE 1: ASSESSMENT OF RPL APPLICATION

Applications that are either credit transfers from a UK higher education degree awarding body or held on a list by the UCS admissions team as an approved RPL arrangement for future applicants will only need to be considered at Stage 1. The signature of the RPL Advisor is sufficient for the RPL claim to be agreed in these instances.

- 5.1. RPL Advisor(s) are typically the subject leads and appointed under the authority of the Dean of Higher Education. The RPL Advisor is normally the Dean of Higher Education or their appointed deputy in their absence.
- 5.2. The course RPL Advisor will carry out an initial assessment of the claim within 5 working days of receipt of the complete and accurate claim.
- 5.3. If the RPL Advisor is not satisfied that there is sufficient evidence, they can either:
- Request more evidence from the applicant; or
 - Reject the claim.
- 5.4. If the application consists of credit transfers from a UK higher education degree awarding body or is on the approved list of RPL arrangements, only the decision of the RPL Advisor is necessary for each claim. In such cases, if the decision is that the RPL is valid, the process following approval is detailed in **7** below.
- 5.5. If the application does not fall under the criteria in **5.4** and the RPL Advisor is satisfied that there is sufficient evidence, the RPL Advisor will note their approval, and then e-mail the form to the RPL Assessor to undertake Stage 2, as detailed in section **6** below.
- 5.6. Following receipt of the decision in **5.5**, the UCS admissions team will write to the applicant to make a conditional offer of a place, subject to the final decision of the RPL Assessor.

- 5.7. If the decision of the RPL Advisor is to reject the claim, the process to be followed is detailed in section 8 below.

6. STAGE 2: APPROVAL OF RPL APPLICATION

- 6.1. RPL Assessor(s) will be the Partner Academic Contact (normally the Dean of HE) or their appointed deputy. The RPL Assessor may not be the same person as the RPL Advisor if that would result in only one person approving the application.
- 6.2. The RPL Assessor will decide within 5 working days of receipt of the complete and accurate claim by the UCS admissions team if the claim is certified learning only. For claims involving other forms of RPL, the RPL Assessor will make the decision within 10 working days of receipt of the correct completed claim.
- 6.3. Where there are substantial numbers of complex claims and/or professional body issues, the input from other experts may be appropriate and delay the process. In such cases, the applicant will be kept informed as to likely time scales.
- 6.4. If the RPL Assessor is not satisfied that there is sufficient evidence, they can either:
- Request more evidence from the applicant; or
 - Reject the claim.
- 6.5. The RPL Assessor will decide whether:
- the claim for RPL is valid;
 - the evidence has been provided; and
 - the volume of credit that will be assigned to the applicant is appropriate.
- 6.6. If the decision of the RPL Assessor is that the claim for RPL is valid, the process following approval is detailed in section 7 below.
- 6.7. If the decision of the RPL Assessor is to reject the claim, the process to be followed is detailed in section 8 below.

7. VALID APPLICATIONS

- 7.1. If the decision is that the claim for RPL is valid, the RPL Advisor or Assessor will:
- complete the RPL form with the volume of credit that will be assigned to the applicant;
 - e-mail the completed RPL form to the UCS admission team;
 - if the RPL Assessor wishes the RPL details to be held on the approved list for future use, they should include this in their e-mail with full details of the arrangement to be included on the list.
- 7.2. The above will constitute approval of the RPL claim.
- 7.3. The UCS admission team will then send an appropriate offer to the applicant. This offer may be either unconditional, for qualifications and experience already obtained, or conditional, where the applicant has not yet completed the qualification for which the RPL has been claimed.
- 7.4. All RPL approvals will be sent to CFSSO at UoP to update their records.
- 7.5. Once the applicant has registered on the course, the UCS admin team will update the records accordingly.

8. REJECTED APPLICATIONS

8.1. If the decision is that the RPL application is rejected, the RPL Advisor or Assessor will:

- complete the RPL form with the reason for the rejection;
- e-mail the completed RPL form to the UCS admission team who will inform the applicant of the rejection, the reasons for it and their right to appeal. Appeals are in line with the UCS appeals policy.

9. BRIDGING MODULES

9.1. Where an applicant is eligible for entry with RPL that covers an entire stage of a course, there may be occasions where, to meet professional body requirements, they need to take an additional module from an earlier stage of the course. Where the timetable allows, these applicants may be allowed to take a maximum of one additional 20 credit module from an earlier stage of the course in addition to the stage they have just entered. This module will be marked as “Interest Only” and will not count towards the credit requirements or any classification.

10. APPEALS AGAINST RPL DECISIONS

10.1. The only grounds on which an appeal will be considered are that:

- there has been a material and significant administrative error in the information received and considered;
- or the decision made was perverse by reference to the evidence supplied by the applicant.

10.2. Applicants may not question the academic judgement of the RPL Advisor or RPL Assessor, and any requests based on such grounds alone will be dismissed.

10.3. Applicants who wish to appeal against the decision to reject their RPL claim can appeal in writing using the UCS appeals process as published on the UCS website.

11. MONITORING AND REVIEW

11.1. Accurate records of RPL applications and processes must be available for scrutiny at any time for both internal and external (University of Portsmouth (UoP)) interested parties as well as by Award External Examiners at the next Board of Examiners.

11.2. The annual monitoring and periodic review process provides an opportunity for subject leaders and collaborative contacts and partners (where relevant) to comment upon RPL entry and practice and if necessary to respond to External Examiner comments.

11.3. UoP can request a sample of completed RPL applications to undertake audit activities at any stage. Any issues remaining unresolved or identified for broader discussion should be referred to the Academic Standards, Quality and Partnerships section.