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New College Stamford

POLICY STATEMENT NO. HE07

TITLE:

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING POLICY AND PROCEDURE– HIGHER EDUCATION

1. INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a generic term for the process by which Higher Education Providers recognise and, where appropriate, award credit for learning that has taken place before entry onto a programme of study. It is where the College compares any existing qualifications or work experience an applicant has with the requirements of HE programmes at the College. RPL has many benefits for students, the College, the workplace and wider society. For students, RPL encourages the pursuit of Higher Education (HE), facilitates access, eliminates duplication of study and can reduce cost and the time needed to complete a qualification. RPL also recognises and promotes lifelong learning, fosters workplace and employer partnerships with the College and increases the number of skilled and capable graduates.

In line with the priority which it gives to promoting opportunities for lifelong learning and widening access to Higher Education, the College is committed to recognising the prior learning, knowledge and experience of all applicants to facilitate their access to higher education. Therefore, the College welcomes applications from prospective students who are seeking to gain exemption from some parts of an academic programme by gaining recognition of prior learning. Such claims may be based either on a previous course of study or on experience gained in paid employment or voluntary activities. A claim for RPL is made as part of the application process. The College then assesses whether an applicant's prior learning can exempt them from any of the modules or support an admission if the applicant does not meet the standard entry requirements.

This policy sets out the regulations governing such applications and explains the processes that are to be followed by prospective students and the staff of the College. It follows the precepts and guidance contained in the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) *UK Quality Code for Higher Education*, specifically Advice and Guidance on Admissions, Recruitment and Widening Access (Nov 2018).

DEFINITIONS AND SCOPE

2. There are 2 broad categories of prior learning recognised by the College:

2.1. Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL)

RPCL refers to prior certificated learning, such learning may have been gained through the pursuit of a programme of study offered by an education provider and publicly recognised through certification. The certification may or may not have been provided within the context of a credit transfer system. The following types of prior learning are recognised:

- study at UK Higher Education institutions;
- credit or qualifications from non-UK Higher Education institutions;

- credit from qualifications on the Ofqual Register of Recognised Qualifications and qualifications on the database of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework;
- other certificated learning (such as professional qualifications) at Higher Education level (also see Credit Assessment);

RPCL also refers to previous learning that would meet the requirements of HE-level study but UK HE credit or Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) credit has not been awarded.

2.2 Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)

RPEL refers to learning which has taken place as a result of reflection upon experience gained outside the formal education and training system. In the case of RPEL, it must be emphasised that accreditation is given for evidence of learning gained through experience and not for the experience alone. Prior Experiential Learning may have taken place in a variety of contexts including:

- Higher Education programmes;
- work situations (paid and voluntary);
- training courses in formal (e.g. further education colleges) and informal settings, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and web-based CPD;
- more generally, through a variety of life experiences.

2.3 Under certain circumstances, most commonly in the case of part-time students, the learning to be accredited may, by prior agreement, take place concurrently with other parts of the programme. In this context RPL does not include the assessment of learning in the workplace or on placements which is an intended or planned element of the programme on which the student is enrolled.

Evidence requirements

3.1 As recognition of prior learning involves the recognition of credit towards an award, it falls within the College's quality assurance and enhancement procedures and the process must in all cases be undertaken with rigour and integrity. In particular, the College must be assured that there is robust evidence of the learning which has resulted from prior certificated study or reflection on experience and must be satisfied that it is equivalent to the learning that would otherwise have been gained by following the elements of the programme at the College from which exemption is sought.

3.2. The staff responsible for making this academic judgement will establish that the evidence shows that the learning is comparable in terms of level and the learning outcomes achieved, and that the knowledge, understanding and skills that have been gained are relevant to the programme which the applicant intends to join and, more particularly, to those parts of the programme from which exemption is sought. Learning outcomes will normally be at module level for undergraduate programmes. These judgements will be facilitated in the case of the recognition of prior certificated learning where the applicant has undertaken a programme of study which is part of a credit transfer scheme. Where this is not the case, and in all cases of applications for the recognition of prior experiential learning, the evidence should be measured against the credit framework in operation at the College. Evidence provided by applicants needs to be relevant, sufficient, authentic and current.

3.3 Applications for entry to programmes which carry professional accreditation will be assessed in the light of the applicant's ability to meet all requirements of that accreditation.

3.4 Criteria for Assessing Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL)

Where an applicant has certificated learning that is at a lower level than the requirements for a particular programme of study, a decision to allow the applicant to join a programme *at the normal entry point* is made by judging the relevance of their learning in terms of whether it meets - or contributes to meeting - the entry requirements of the programme.

3.4.1 Similarly, an applicant's certificated learning may also be judged as to its relevance in exempting an applicant from individual modules or a stage of study. A decision to accept credits gained elsewhere as *counting towards credit accumulation for the programme of study* can be made where an individual has completed the same module (or a complete course) that bears UK Higher Education credit.

3.4.2 All RPCL applications are considered by the Programme Leader and Head of HE. To apply for RPCL, applicants must provide the College with original, official evidence of previous study. Evidence received via email or photocopy will not be accepted. If the applicant is unable to bring original documents to the Quality Office, the College can accept formally verified copies made by a solicitor. Credits will only be awarded for periods of study that have been formally assessed and successfully completed. Credit will not be awarded for any compensated/condoned passes.

3.4.3 If the applicant's prior learning is not certificated, the College will assess the applicant's learning directly, either by requiring the applicant to take the normal progression assessments of the programme or by some other appropriate form of assessment.

3.5 Criteria for assessing Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)

A decision to *exempt an applicant from one or more individual modules within the programme of study* can also be made on the basis that the applicant has demonstrated achievement of the learning outcomes from the module through Experiential Learning. In assessing applications for RPEL, the College evaluates the application's evidence to confirm:

- **Level:** The evidence that is presented and the learning that is claimed must be at the appropriate level.
- **Relevance:** There should be an appropriate match between the evidence of prior learning and the applicant's intended programme of study.
- **Sufficiency:** The evidence submitted should demonstrate the achievement of the learning claimed and be sufficient to cover the learning outcomes of the module(s) on the intended programme of study.
- **Currency:** The evidence should relate to current learning. This would normally be judged as learning that has been completed within 15 years of the claim.
- **Authenticity:** The evidence of prior learning should accurately and unambiguously uphold the applicant's achievements.

RPL Credit Allowances and Restrictions

4.1. There are limits as to the maximum and minimum volume of credit which can be awarded through accreditation of prior learning.

4.2 Minimum Credit Allowance

Credit cannot be awarded for a fraction of a module because applicants must be able to demonstrate the ability to meet all of a module's learning outcomes. For this reason, the minimum number of credits that can be considered for exemption through the RPL process is the smallest-sized module within the programme on which the student intends to study.

4.3. Maximum Credit Allowance

A student may be awarded recognition for prior learning (certified, experiential or uncertified), towards the requirements of a named award up to two-thirds of the total credit requirements for that award. Two-thirds of RPL is only permitted for full, three-year bachelor's degrees (360 credits) and not sub-awards, where the usual maximum is 50%.

4.4 Restrictions of Credit Allowance

Credit for prior learning (certified, experiential or uncertified) is not permitted at Level 6 where students are expected to complete 120 credits in order to gain the award. Students directly entering a validated qualification Level 6 'top-up' programme, comprising 120 credits and designed to build upon a lower credit bearing award, may not enter the programme with credit.

Credit already used for RPL purposes (RPCL or RPEL) on a previous programme of study is not normally accepted for a subsequent programme.

4.5 ***Currency of prior learning***

Applications for the recognition of prior learning are subject to the currency of that learning. The student must have undertaken the learning for which recognition is sought, whether certificated or experiential, normally no more than five years before commencing the programme which he or she will be entering with advanced standing or in which exemption from specified modules is to be granted.

4.6 ***Claims relating to credit which has already contributed to an award***

Learning that has previously been accredited in the award of another qualification cannot be accepted for the purposes of the recognition of prior certificated learning unless the award is a recognised stage in the progression to a higher award – e.g. certificate and diploma of HE.

4.7 ***Use of marks or grades awarded by other institutions***

Marks or grades awarded by another provider will not be accepted when a claim for recognition of prior certificated learning has been successful. The student's transcript will show all modules which form part of the programme for which the student has been accepted but, in the case of those from which exemption has been granted, will indicate that the credit has been awarded without a mark or grade through RPL. In cases where a mark or a grade is material to the classification of a final award, a grade or mark average for that level will be used for modules which have been accredited.

Programme leaders should be particularly careful to bring this regulation to the attention of prospective applicants.

5. ***Timing of applications***

Applications for RPL should be made at the same time as an application to join a programme of study. Prospective students applying for admission with advanced standing (entry to a programme after the completion of the first level) must have their application approved before entry. An application for exemption from a module may not be made retrospectively or after its delivery has commenced.

6. Review

Boards of Examiners will receive information regarding recognition of prior learning and will monitor the progress of such students.

Process

7.1 Initial enquiries regarding RPL should be made to the Head of Higher Education using the RPL form stating clearly the programme for which the application will be made and, if possible, giving an indication of those elements of the programme for which exemption is to be claimed. Such applicants will in other respects be subject to normal entry requirements and procedures (as detailed in the HE Admissions Policy).

7.2 In the case of RPCL, the Programme Leader will confirm with the applicant the modules for which exemption is sought and the elements of the applicant's previous programme on which the claim is based. The Applicant will need to supply:

- (i) the original formal certification showing their achievement on the previous programme and
- (ii) information about the programme, typically including the programme specification (or, if not available, a statement of the aims and learning outcomes) and the relevant module descriptors.

If the applicant has not yet completed their previous programme then their approval will be conditional on their achievement of the award.

7.3 The applicant will complete form RPL1 and submit, with the required evidence, to the Head of Higher Education. The form will be logged and then be sent to the appropriate Programme Leader and Head of Department. The Programme Leader and Head of Department will then consider the evidence and decide whether the application should be (i) supported, (ii) supported with modifications or (iii) rejected. Where the applicant's previous programme has not operated under a credit transfer system, the credit volume of the prior learning will be assessed (normally taking a complete stage as 120 credits in the case of an undergraduate programme) and its level by reference to the *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications* (FHEQ) and current level descriptors. The decision will be recorded and the form returned to the Head of Higher Education. Where the application is not supported, or it is supported with modifications, the reasons for that decision and the nature of any modifications should be clearly stated.

7.4 In the case of an application for RPEL, a meeting will normally be arranged between the Programme Leader, Head of Department and applicant at which the nature of the applicant's experience and an outline of the evidence of learning that would be required to support the claim will be discussed. The applicant should not be asked to complete further work as evidence at this stage.

7.5 The Programme Leader and applicant will complete form RPL2 indicating briefly the nature of the applicant's relevant prior experience and the module(s) for which exemption is claimed. The Programme Leader and Head of Department will then consider the proposal and decide whether the application should be (i) given initial approval, (ii) given initial approval with modifications or (iii) rejected. The decision will be recorded, and the form, together with a specification of the evidence of learning that the student will be expected to provide, should be returned to the Head of Higher Education. Where the application is not supported, or it is supported with modifications, the reasons for that decision and the nature of any modifications should be clearly stated.

7.6 Where an application for RPL is not supported, the Head of Higher Education will advise the applicant of the outcome and the reasons for that decision.

7.7 Applications which are supported, will be considered by the Head of Higher Education. The Head of Higher Education may decide to accept or reject the Programme Leader's recommendation or to make acceptance subject to further modifications. The application may also be referred to the Programme Leader for further information or evidence before making a decision. The Head of Higher Education will inform the applicant and Programme Leader of the final decision.

7.8 In the case of an application for prior experiential learning, the Programme Leader will draw up an assignment brief setting out the nature of the assessed work that will be required.

7.9 The applicant will be offered advice on how to approach the assignment, especially with regard to the collection of appropriate evidence of achieved learning outcomes and the style in which such an analytical account should be presented. An appropriate tutor will be nominated by the Programme Leader for this purpose but he or she will not normally be involved in the assessment of the claim. It may also be appropriate to refer the applicant to Learner Support for further guidance.

7.10 In the case of successful applications for both prior certificated learning and prior experiential learning, the student will be provided with a full statement of the elements of the programme for which accreditation has been granted and confirmation of their programme of study, i.e. those modules which must be undertaken in order to complete the programme. The module(s) will be recorded on the final transcript as RPL. Where the application is rejected, students will be advised that they may appeal on the grounds of procedural irregularity but may not challenge an academic judgement.

8 Complaints and Appeals

In order to safeguard the interest of applicants, the College welcomes complaints from any applicant who believes their application has not been dealt with in accordance with the College's policies and procedures. An applicant who wishes to complain should do so via the formal College HE Complaints procedure. The complaints policy is available on the College website.

9 Monitoring and Evaluation

RPL decisions relating to course admission and credit allowance are reported to Academic Board annually. The RPL process is monitored and its efficacy is evaluated by the Academic Board.

10 Data Protection

The College will process personal information, collected from applicants during the admissions process in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

This policy has been assessed and considered for impact upon people who share the following protected characteristics and factors: race, gender and gender identity, disability (including learning difficulty), religion and belief, sexual orientation, age, pregnancy, maternity and marital status.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT SUMMARY:

This policy has been impact assessed and has identified the following:

- Negative impacts N*
- Appropriate actions/mitigations to address the negative impacts have been put in place (Y/N)

- Positive impacts Y

PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

NCS is committed to protecting the personal data of its students, employees and other stakeholders in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). We have a variety of methods and controls to ensure we protect that data appropriately. Personal data processing activities are subject to a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) as a key component of a 'Privacy by Design' approach. The risks to the rights and freedoms of individuals resulting from the processing of personal data are examined, and appropriate measures are put in place to protect these rights throughout the processing lifecycle.

LINKED POLICIES:

Admissions Policy

RESPONSIBILITY:

Head of HE



APPLICATION FOR THE RECOGNITION OF PRIOR CERTIFICATED LEARNING

Before completion please read the 'Notes for Guidance' which can be found attached.

Part A – Applicant Details

Name of Student

Title		Surname		First Names	
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Telephone		Email	
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Address

Part B – Details of Application

Previous/Current Programme	Programme applied for
Name of Institution	
Title of Programme/Course	
Title of Final Award	

Please indicate which level of entry is requested if wishing to join an Undergraduate Programme	
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Details of Prior Learning (modules)	Level	Credit	Code and Title of Module to be accredited	Level	Credit

Important Note to Applicant:

Transcript, Programme Specifications and Module Descriptors for which accreditation is claimed **must** be attached to this application. Applications without the appropriate documentation will not be considered

Signature		Date	
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Part C – Mapping and Comments of Programme Leader

Mapping: To be completed by the Programme Leader

Student Outcomes Achieved	Programme and Module Outcomes

Comments:

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I support this application	
I support this application with the modifications noted above	
I do not support this application	
I have attached the appropriate documentary evidence	

Signature		Date	
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Comments of Head of Higher Education

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I support this application	
I support this application with the modifications noted above	
I do not support this application	

Signature		Date	
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APPLICATION FOR THE RECOGNITION OF PRIOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Before completion please also read the 'Notes for Guidance' which can be found attached.

Part A – Applicant Details

Name of Student

Title		Surname		First names	
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Telephone		Email	
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Address

Part B – Details of Application

College programme for which application is being made	
Name of Programme	
Title of Award	

Outline description of prior experience and the nature of evidence of learning	Modules for which credit is claimed		
	Code and Title of module	Level	Credit

Outline description of prior experience and the nature of evidence of learning	Modules for which credit is claimed		
	Code and Title of module	Level	Credit

Important Note to Applicant:

All written evidence pertinent to the experiential learning for which accreditation is claimed must be attached to this application. Applications without appropriate documentation will not be considered.

Signature		Date	
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Part C – Mapping and Comments of Programme Leader**Mapping:**

Student Experience Achieved	Module Outcomes

Comments:

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I support this application	
I support this application with the modifications noted above	
I do not support this application	
I have attached the appropriate documentary evidence	

Signature		Date	
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Comments of Head of Higher Education

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I support this application	
I support this application with the modifications noted above	
I do not support this application	

Signature		Date	
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Guidance notes for Application for the Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPL) and Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)

RPL is the tool used to gain exemption from specified elements of an academic programme of study at the College using learning from an education provider and publicly recognised through certification. This learning could have been gained through the pursuit of a programme at an educational institution and the certification may or may not have been provided within the context of a credit transfer system. This type of application is termed as *Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPL)*.

Alternatively, the learning may have taken place as a result of reflection upon experience gained outside the formal education and training system. The term *Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning* is applied to this type of application.

The form RPL1 for certificated learning or RPL2 for experiential learning must be completed by the applicant outlining the course of study and all modules and credits to be considered for RPL and the course of study wishing to be pursued by the applicant at College.

To support an application for RPL, the applicant must provide evidence of the content of the prior learning by attaching a Transcript of Results, an outline of the Programme previously studied which may be a Programme Handbook issued at the beginning of the course of study and the description and content of the modules within the programme outlining the 'Learning Outcomes' expected from the individual module or area of work. Applications cannot be considered without supporting evidence.

To support an application for RPEL, the applicant will work with the Programme Leader to develop a portfolio. Examples of the contents of a portfolio:

- a professional narrative/essay on the learning gained and demonstrate how this matches the target learning outcomes against which exemption is being claimed
- samples of work e.g. assessment or leadership reports; evidence of supervision
- witness testimony from relevant people such as line managers, colleagues, or others who can confirm achievement/learning gained
- it may be relevant to include details of study days attended or non-accredited courses as evidence of meeting the learning outcomes

Part A – Applicant Details

Applicants should ensure all contact details are clear and legible.

Part B – Details of Application

Applicants should state in full the name of the educational institution and the programme or course of study together with the title of any award gained.

If an application is being made for individual modules ensure that this section is completed for each module to be considered.

Applicants applying to join an Undergraduate Programme should indicate at which level they wish to be considered for on the entry to a course of study at this college i.e. Level 4 is typically Year 1. Level 5 equates to Year 2.

Complete application forms and any additional evidence should be brought to:

Head of Higher Education
New College Stamford
Drift Road
Stamford
PE9 1XA

A copy of the form and supporting documents should be retained. Where photocopies of documents are submitted. You will be required to provide the Head of Higher Education with sight of the original documents in order to verify their authenticity.