



Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy

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1. SCOPE

- 1.1 The provision of the recognition of prior learning (RPL) is a key part of the commitment of the University College of Osteopathy (UCO) to support widening participation and access to higher education. Subsequently the UCO is committed to recognising the achievements of applicants and to credit them for prior learning they have already achieved.
- 1.2 Applicants with prior learning are therefore eligible to apply for RPL against whole units of UCO courses, the details of which are outlined within this policy and in further detail in the relevant RPL Handbooks for each course where RPL is recognised.
- 1.3 The UCO follows the principles and guidance for conduct as expressed in the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Advice and Guidance on Assessment (Guiding Principles 2, 3, November 2018)¹ and the Office for Students' Regulatory Framework for Higher Education in England², establishes the context of RPL for applicants and provides an overview of the process for those wishing to apply.
- 1.4 RPL is based on the principle that learning, wherever it occurs, can count towards an academic qualification provided that it can be measured, authenticated and is at an appropriate level.
- 1.5 The RPL decision-making process is a matter of academic judgment.
- 1.6 RPL may comprise of the accreditation of prior certificated learning and / or accreditation of prior experiential or otherwise un-assessed learning.
- 1.7 Any prior certificated learning will have taken place in a recognised Higher Education institution or equivalent and will have been assessed. The outcome of such learning is the production of an authenticated certificate and/or transcript. Certificated learning may have resulted in a particular qualification.
- 1.8 Any prior experiential learning will normally have taken place within a professional context and is typically uncertificated. Applications for experiential RPL should include as a minimum.
 - a) An account of the experiential learning undertaken including the dates and duration of the learning.
 - b) A detailed statement of what has been learned from the experiential learning and how this meets the learning outcomes of the unit(s) RPL is being applied for.
 - c) Confirmation from an employer or other objective source of the experiential learning being claimed.

¹ [Assessment \(qaa.ac.uk\)](https://www.qaa.ac.uk)

² [The regulatory framework for higher education in England - Office for Students](https://www.officeforstudents.org)

2. PRINCIPLES OF RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) PROCEDURES

2.1 The principles of RPL procedures which follow the QAA guidelines are:

- a) RPL policies, processes, procedures, practices and decisions should be transparent, rigorous, reliable, fair and accessible to individuals and stakeholders to ensure that users can be confident of the decisions and outcomes of RPL.
- b) The process of assessment for RPL is subject to the same quality assurance and monitoring standards as any other form of assessment.
- c) Availability and procedures will be clearly publicised to all prospective and current students on the UCO website and other relevant documentation.
- d) Applicants are only able to undertake the RPL process for whole units and not for the specific content of a course.
- e) Applicants are normally expected to apply for RPL prior to the commencement of the relevant units.
- f) RPL is dependent on the provision of documentary evidence of the achievement of learning or experience at the appropriate level by the applicant. The learning should be consistent with the course and unit/s for which RPL is to be applied.
- g) It is the responsibility of the RPL applicant to evaluate their existing evidence and to provisionally map this evidence against the Unit learning outcomes so that they are able to make an informed decision prior to applying for RPL. Support can be given in this where needed.
- h) RPL credits may only be awarded for certain units defined in the relevant course RPL handbook and will be recorded on the student's transcript.
- i) Award of RPL credits is presented at the appropriate board of examiners.
- j) The RPL process does not award grades or marks.
- k) Where RPL credits have been used for an award, these credits cannot be used again for a subsequent award at the same level.
- l) Support will be provided to RPL applicants through the provision of a course specific RPL handbook. Further support will be provided through the UCO's Admission team and the relevant Course Leader.
- m) RPL applications will normally only be considered once an applicant has accepted an offer to study on a UCO and following receipt of payment for the RPL application process.
- n) RPL involves a process of documenting and mapping learning achievements against learning outcomes of a unit for which they are applying for RPL credits, and is evaluated by an appropriate academic subject specialist (normally the Unit Leader for that unit).
- o) Unit Leader recommendations will be considered by an RPL committee which will make the final decision as to the awarding of credits for units of study.
- p) Normally, RPL applications must be completed in advance of commencing the modified course of study.

- q) Certificated evidence submitted to RPL will only be considered based on credit that was obtained no more than five years previously. However, claims based on credit outside this time limit may be considered under accredited prior experiential learning where a candidate is able to demonstrate evidence of continuous application, updating and relevance to their practice and the award sought.

3. RPL APPLICATION PROCESS

- 3.1 The detail of the application included here provides an overview of the stages of the process.
- 3.2 Full details of units eligible for RPL, how to complete an application and how to present a portfolio of evidence can be found in the relevant Course RPL Handbook.

A) STAGE 1

- 3.3 During the application process, prospective students are made aware of the RPL process, if their academic qualifications or experience are appropriate for an RPL application. At the interview phase of the process, the interviewers can investigate whether RPL is a possibility with the applicant. Applicants can also access the RPL policy at any time through the UCO website.
- 3.4 Normally the RPL process will only be initiated once an applicant has accepted an offer to study at the UCO and would normally need to be initiated and completed prior to the commencement of the course for which RPL is being applied.
- 3.5 Potential RPL applicants will be identified by the relevant Course Recruitment Group (CRG) and will be given the appropriate RPL handbook containing information required to complete the application. Each applicant will be able to contact the RPL Co-ordinator to help support them in their application. Deadlines will be given for the submission of the evidence appropriate to course entry dates.
- 3.6 Each application will normally take a maximum of 4 weeks to process.

B) STAGE 2

- 3.7 Applications will be submitted to a RPL Co-ordinator who will then complete an RPL checklist to ensure that the application form has been completed in full.
- 3.8 The RPL application will then be passed to the relevant Course Leader for review to ensure that the mapping evidence is appropriate and relevant. If it is felt that there is only limited evidence the applicant will be asked to submit further supporting evidence. Details of any further evidence needed will be provided to the applicant.

C) STAGE 3

- 3.9 Once checked and deemed to be complete the application will be forwarded to the relevant Unit Leader(s). The evidence submitted will be assessed to ensure that the appropriate unit learning outcomes have been successfully met from prior certificated or experiential learning. The Unit Leader will subsequently make a recommendation on the application and return this to the RPL Co-ordinator.

- 3.10 The RPL Co-ordinator will convene the RPL committee (either face to face or electronically) who will review each RPL application and recommendations made by the Unit Leader(s). The Role of the RPL committee is to ensure that the assessment of the evidence is rigorous and consistently applied, and that the evidence provided meets the relevant learning outcomes in full.
- 3.11 The RPL committee will consist of:
- a) Course Leader (Chair)
 - b) A representative from the Registry Department
 - c) Unit Leader(s) relevant to the units for which the applicant has applied for RPL.
- 3.12 The RPL committee will make one of two recommendations:
- i. **The RPL application is successful:** The applicant's prior learning has met the relevant unit learning outcomes in full and will be awarded RPL credit equal to that of the unit(s) RPL has been awarded for. The applicant will not be required to sit the assessments relating to the unit(s) that has been successfully recognised.
 - ii. **The RPL application has been unsuccessful:** The applicant's prior learning has not met the relevant unit learning outcomes in full and will not be awarded with RPL credit for that unit. The applicant will be informed why the application has not been successful and will be required to study the unit in full.
- 3.13 Each applicant will be contacted in writing to inform them of the outcome of their RPL application with details of their modified course of learning if their application has been successful. They will also be provided with confirmation of any adjusted course fees.
- 3.14 A record of RPL credits awarded will be made against the student's record.
- 3.15 The Registrar will include all successful applications for RPL at the appropriate Board of Examiners meeting to note.

4. RPL OUTCOME APPEAL PROCESS

- 4.1 If the applicant is not satisfied with the outcome of the RPL process they may lodge an appeal. There are two grounds for appealing:
- i. The application process was not administered appropriately.
 - ii. Additional information in support of the RPL application has become available that would address identified omissions in the initial application.
- 4.2 If an applicant wishes to appeal, they should submit a written request to the RPL Co-ordinator detailing the grounds for their appeal and evidence to support their appeal, for example, additional information to support their RPL application or correspondence identifying maladministration. Receipt of the appeal will be acknowledged by the RPL Co-ordinator within 5 working days.
- 4.3 The Director of Teaching, Learning & Assessment will review and investigate the appeal and determine whether it should be upheld.

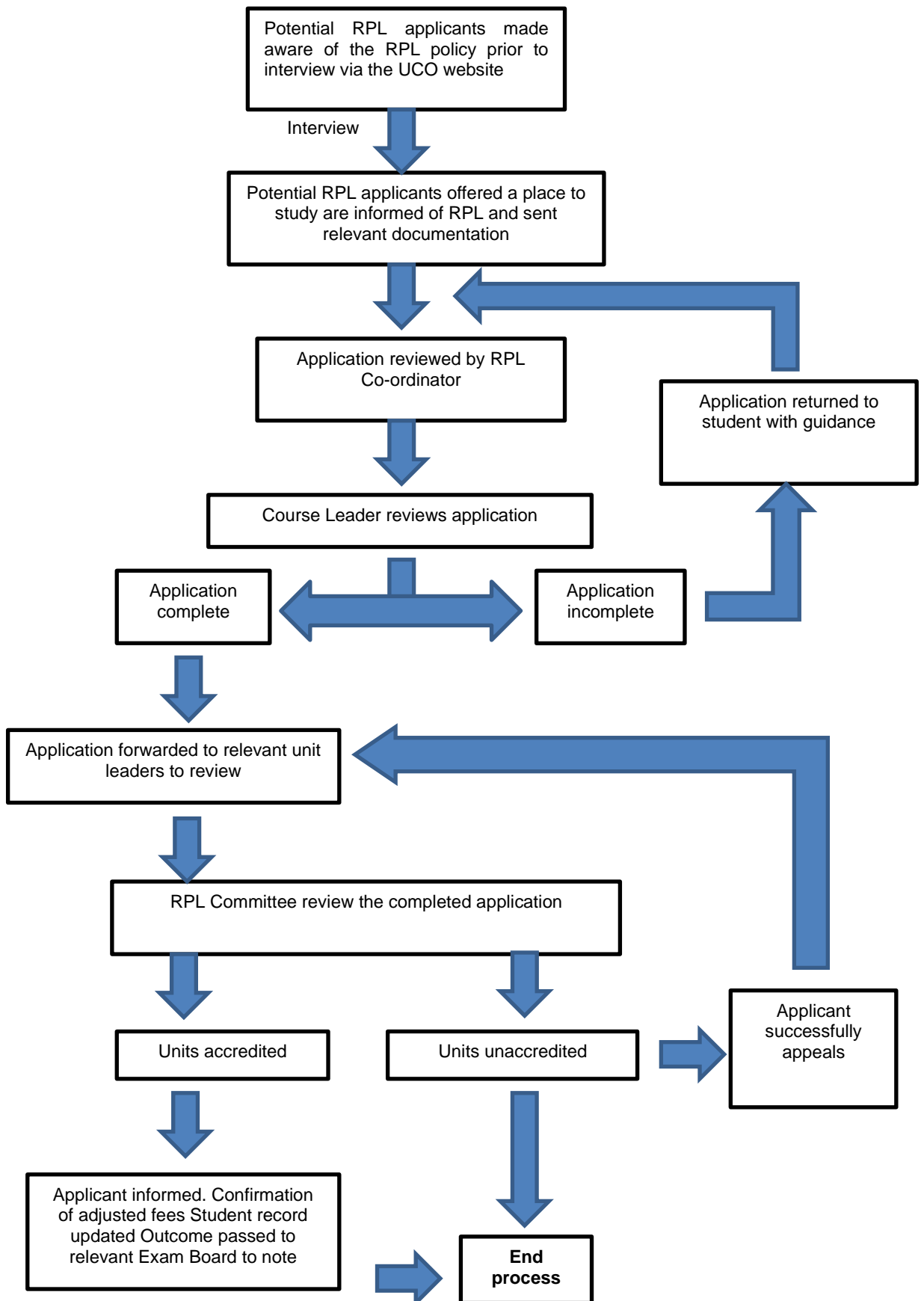
- 4.4 All appeal outcomes will normally be communicated to the applicant in writing by the RPL Co-ordinator within 4 weeks.

5. FRAUDULENT RPL APPLICATIONS

- 5.1 If an application is found to contain deliberately false or misleading information or if supporting evidence is found to be counterfeit, then this will normally lead to the offer of a place to study at UCO being rescinded.
- 5.2 If fraudulent RPL applications are discovered after a course of study has commenced, then this may lead to a misconduct investigation related to Fitness to Practice on the grounds of probity. The consequences of this could be serious including, ultimately, expulsion from the Course. The UCO Fitness to Practice Policy is available from:

<https://www.uco.ac.uk/about-uco/who-we-are/policies-procedures-and-privacy>

RPL APPLICATION FLOW CHART



CORE DOCUMENTATION RECORD PAGE

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy

Version number	Dates produced and approved (include committee)	Reason for production/ revision	Author	Location(s)	Proposed next review date and approval required
V1.0	Jan 2012 Academic Council	To provide a formal process for RPL	M.Ost Course Leader	J:\0 Quality Team - Core Documentation Intranet	Jan 2014
V2.0	Jan 2015 Academic Council	Enhancement to existing policy. Biennial Review	M.Ost (FT & PT) Course Leaders	J:\0 Quality Team - Core Documentation Intranet	Dec 2016
V3.0	Mar 2017 Academic Council	To update the policy to align with the UCO curriculum being introduced in Sept 2017	M.Ost (FT & PT) Course Leaders	J:\0 Quality Team - Core Documentation Intranet	Mar 2019
V4.0	Aug 2017 PRAG Chair	Administrative Amendments to update institution name change from British School of Osteopathy to University College of Osteopathy.	M.Ost (FT & PT) Course Leaders	All master versions will be held in: J:\0 Quality Team - Core Documentation Intranet	Mar 2019
V5.0	May 2018 PRAG Chair	Administrative Amendments to reflect title changes (i.e. from Principal to Vice-Chancellor, etc.)	M.Ost (FT & PT) Course Leaders	All master versions will be held in: J:\0 Quality Team - Core Documentation Intranet	Mar 2019
V6.0	Jul 2019 Academic Council	Annual Review Major Amendments to reflect latest QAA Quality Code and inclusion of Fraudulent Applications Section.	M.Ost Course Leader	All master versions will be held in: J:\0 Quality Team - Core Documentation Website	Jul 2022
V7	March 2023	Scheduled Review: Major amendments to update the policy throughout; to align the policy more closely to UCO Academic Regulations regarding experiential RPL; to clarify the appeals process to reflect staff changes.	Director of Teaching, Learning and Assessment	All master versions will be held in: SharePoint: QA Dept Published: UCO Website	March 2026

Equality Impact	
Positive equality impact (i.e. the policy/procedure/guideline significantly reduces inequalities)	
Neutral equality impact (i.e. no significant effect)	X
Negative equality impact (i.e. increasing inequalities)	
If you have any feedback or suggestions for enhancing this policy, please email your comments to: quality@uco.ac.uk	