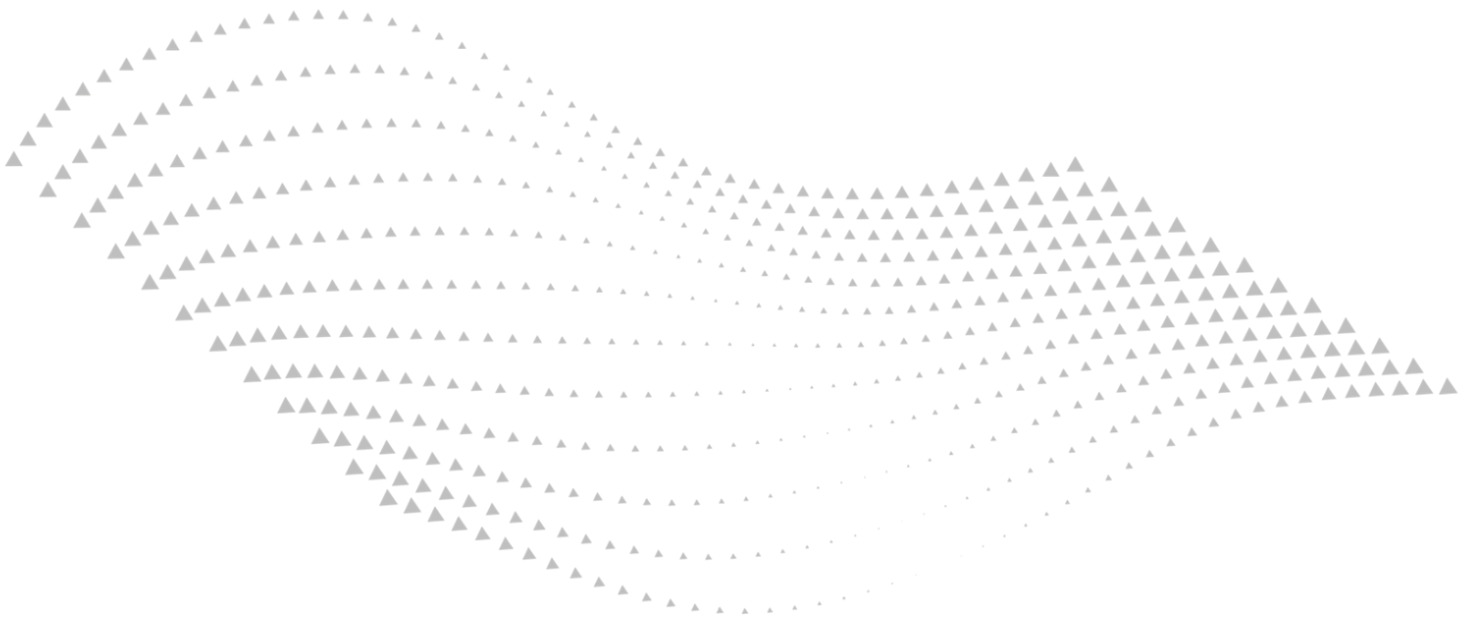


BIMM
UNIVERSITY

A university
for the creative
industries

PG Recognition of Prior Certified & Experiential Learning Policy & Procedure



Last approved: June 2020

Approved by: Academic Board

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Section A: Introduction & Terminology

Introduction

This Policy & Procedure applies to all applicants to postgraduate provision delivered at BIMM University.

The University recognises the value of learning wherever it occurs, either to meet course entry requirements or to achieve credit towards named awards. However, Recognition of Prior Certified & Experiential Learning (RPCEL) will only be possible where learning can be assured to be academically valid, and applications for RPCEL are subject to the same quality assurance processes as learning derived from taught courses.

This document defines the policy and procedure for the submission and consideration of requests for exemption from individual modules or for applicants without the relevant formal academic qualifications to satisfy the entry criteria for a postgraduate course at the University.

The University shall seek to operate this Policy & Procedure in a way that is fair and in accordance with legal requirements and the University's regulations at all times. This includes specific compliance with the Equality Act and the University's Equal Opportunities & Diversity Policy, as well as a commitment that the University will foster stronger recruitment from groups currently under-represented in higher education, by working to raise aspirations and break down barriers to participation such as those created by culture, geography, social and economic factors.

Publicity

Details about RPCEL, including information on where prospective students can obtain advice and guidance about submitting an application and time limits shall be publicised to applicants via the University's prospectuses.

Terminology

- **Recognition** - Refers to the process whereby applicants of all ages and backgrounds are eligible to receive recognition and/or formal credit for learning acquired in the past through formal study, through work and other life experiences.
- **Recognition of Prior Certified & Experiential Learning (RPCEL)** - Refers to the formal recognition of prior learning at postgraduate level gained outside the University through:
 - Formally assessed and certified courses;
 - Other experience, which is uncertified and not previously assessed. For example, learning from paid or unpaid work, community activities, leisure pursuits and other informal learning experiences.
- **Accreditation of Prior Learning (including credit transfer)** - It is the University's responsibility to decide how many specific credits to award an individual student via RPCEL, based on the level, extent, and perceived relevance of the learning (both knowledge and skills-based) compared to their intended course of study at the University. Where 'recognised' learning meets the criteria above and has been allocated credit, the University is responsible for determining whether the credit awarded by the body which approved the course/qualification is equivalent to the credit system used by the University, in accordance with the European Credit Transfer & Accumulation System ([ECTS](#)). Where appropriate, credit will be 'transferred' at an equivalent level and volume.

Outgoing Students

All students who exit the University, either upon completion of their intended award or part way through a course, are issued with an academic transcript which details the modules taken, their credit values, the marks achieved and the award attained (including exit awards).

Students who intend to transfer credit to another institution will require electronic copies of the course specification documents to support their application. These are available to current students on the VLE and can be requested by former students, along with digital copies of academic transcripts, via email to registry@bimm.ac.uk. The decision to accept credit achieved at BIMM University is at the discretion of the receiving institution.

Section B: Application Process

Criteria, Conditions & Restrictions for RPCEL

Applicants to postgraduate courses at the University will be required to have achieved an undergraduate degree at 2:2 or above or significant professional experience in the creative arts/industries.

An RPCEL Portfolio should provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the competence gained by the applicant is equivalent to the level of learning and competence that would have been gained by undertaking a qualification at the level of the entry requirements.

RPCEL Portfolio claims will be assessed according to the following criteria:

- **Sufficient** - Keep in mind that evidence presented (e.g. a portfolio or syllabus) should be concise and contain sufficient evidence for the purpose intended.
- **Recent** - How recent the learning and/or experience is can determine its value. Certain skills and knowledge, for example, can quickly become redundant.
- **Authentic** - For certain evidence to be accepted it may require endorsement or a reference from relevant sources, e.g. employers or validating institutions.
- **Relevant** - The specifications of a job or the learning outcomes of a particular qualification will determine the relevance of the evidence.

The procedures for recognising prior learning shall ensure that the learning which has taken place and is presented as RPCEL is equivalent to the learning that would have otherwise occurred had the student studied all elements of the course without RPCEL, i.e. that the learning outcomes of the modules accredited, or course elements exempted, have been met.

Criteria

When considering evidence for prior certified learning, the RPCEL Assessor shall:

- Confirm (against a transcript of credit or award certificate) that credit has been awarded by an agency, such as a University, recognised by BIMM University;
- Confirm (against a transcript of credit or award certificate) that the learning activity has been given a credit rating (e.g. 15 CATS credits at level 7), or judge the level and amount of credit on the basis of the year and volume of study at another UK institution, or confirm the level and volume of study successfully undertaken in an overseas University or similar institution;
- Assess the evidence submitted against the requirements and learning outcomes of the relevant degree course and the constituent modules;
- Confirm that the learning has been in a subject area relevant to the course of study.

When considering evidence for experiential learning, the RPCEL Assessor shall:

- Assess equivalences of competence between learning at work (for example) and having gained a specific qualification.

The award of specific credit via RPCEL towards an intended postgraduate course at the University is not guaranteed and may not necessarily directly reflect the value/level of the general credit assigned to the current/previous qualification by the validating body, i.e. it may be less. Exemptions may not be granted where a student has previously registered for and failed part of an award and wishes to seek readmission to the same or similar award.

'Shelf Life' of Certified or Experiential Learning

Recognition and accreditation shall normally be awarded for learning achieved within five years prior to

the enrolment date for the intended course at the University.

Prior learning completed more than five years prior to the enrolment date for the intended course may be recognised and accredited subject to the following conditions:

- The Course Leader confirms that the learning is still relevant and meets the required Learning Outcomes; and/or
- The applicant can demonstrate evidence of continuous application, updating and relevance to their practice (in the case of professional courses) and the award sought.

Limits to the Volume of Certified Learning

Specific limits on the amount of RPCEL that may be transferred to a course at the University are defined below.

Award	Maximum credits which may be accredited	Minimum credits to be passed on BIMM University courses	Total credits required for award
Master's Degree	60 (level 7)	120 (level 7)	180

Recognition of Prior Certified Learning for Whole Modules

Certified learning shall only be considered for modules of study; not elements therein. If an applicant does not have full credit for a module, then the RPCEL Assessor may recommend that they produce additional work at the appropriate level to be marked and moderated before a final decision is reached to approve or reject certified learning for that module.

Credit Transfers

Subject to relevance, certified learning will normally be transferred at the same or equivalent level as that awarded by the other institution, in accordance with the European Credit Transfer & Accumulation System ([ECTS](#)). Credit achieved at a higher level may exempt a student from modules at a lower level (i.e. downgraded credit). However, it is not normally permissible to offset credit achieved at a lower level from modules at a higher level (i.e. upgraded credit). Students shall not normally receive more than one allocation of credit on the basis of a single learning activity.

Transfer of Marks/Grades

Recognition of prior certified learning enables a learner to transfer credit gained within one course to another course at the same or a different institution. The credit may come from an incomplete or completed award and may be used as a foundation for a higher award. Credit which can be transferred into courses at the University must be at the same level of study or higher.

Marks and/or grades attached to such credit shall only be recognised and transferred to the new course if the prior certified learning was undertaken at the University.

Marks and/or grades from a course undertaken at another institution shall not be transferred unless approved via an Institutional Agreement or Exemption, the latter of which would require approval by Academic Board.

Calculation of Final Awards & Transcripts

The student's academic transcript shall clearly show where credit has been awarded based on RPCEL,

rather than study of the module(s), or where a student has been exempted from elements of the course. Students who transfer credit and marks/grades within the University or one its partners shall normally have their final award calculated and, where appropriate, classified according to the relevant award rules.

Students who are only permitted to transfer credit without marks/grades and/or experiential learning may be unable to meet the appropriate requirements for award classification. In these cases, the RPCEL approval process shall include confirmation of how the calculation method shall be amended to calculate their final award in a consistent and fair manner.

Unless stated otherwise, the method approved will normally be an overall weighted average of all module marks achieved by the student while studying at the University.

Falsification or Misrepresentation of Evidence

The University reserves the right to terminate an application for or registration on a course if the applicant/student is found to have omitted relevant facts or information in connection with their RPCEL application or to have falsified or misrepresented any part of their application.

Application Requirements

Applications for RPCEL shall consist of a written request, stating the BIMM University award in respect of which the student seeks RPCEL, confirmation of whether their application is for exemption from modules or entry only and a portfolio as outlined below.

- For Certified Learning:
 - A statement of claim (150 words): a brief statement outlining the basis of an applicant's RPCEL claim, which should provide a summary of the written work being submitted.
 - A certified copy of a transcript and award certificate;
 - A Course Specification, curriculum or syllabus with module descriptions (including Learning Outcomes), where appropriate.
 - Examples of written academic work (up to 15,000 words; no less than 3500 words): These can include dissertations, essays, research reports and examples of reflective writing. The pieces need to make use of a recognised referencing system, and applicants are advised to submit at least two pieces.
- For Experiential Learning:

This route allows applicants to be recognised for prior learning gained through experience in the workplace or through private study outside of formally accredited school, college or university courses. Experiential credits are not awarded simply on the basis of experience, but also on an applicant's ability to reflect on and write about this experience. The assignment allows applicants to demonstrate informal experiential learning in more academic terms.

A Portfolio should contain the following sections:

- Statement of claim (150 words): a brief statement outlining the basis of an applicant's RPCEL claim. It should provide a summary of the experience on which the application will be based and why it is relevant.
- CV: This should include details of the applicant's educational and professional history, along with a list of competencies.
- Reflective Essay (2500-3000 words): In this essay, applicants are required to reflect on past experiences and accomplishments, concentrating on what they have learnt through these experiences and how they have prepared them for postgraduate study. Applicants should

choose relevant examples that showcase their professional practice and experience in the creative arts/industries and are invited to include audio-visual elements in the submission if this supports the reflection. Reflective writing needs to demonstrate that additional reading has been carried out and these sources should be referenced using the Harvard Referencing System (please see Appendix 1 for further details).

The procedure for considering requests for the RPCEL shall include the following stages:

- Agreement of work to be submitted (e.g. portfolio, presentation, submission of artefacts, examinations);
- Agreement of submission date;
- Agreement of any tutorial arrangements (including monitoring progress towards submission, reviewing drafts, etc.);
- Clarification of arrangements for assessment (including criteria, internal and external approval processes).

Timescale for Submission

Applicants wishing to be awarded credit for RPCEL will be advised in the first instance to discuss the matter with the Admissions Team, who will ensure that the applicant is informed of this policy and procedure.

Applications for RPCEL should normally be made no later than ten weeks in advance of enrolling on the intended course for which they are seeking to transfer prior certificated or experiential learning, unless specific course requirements have set an earlier deadline. Where earlier deadlines are required, this shall be published in the prospectus, as appropriate.

Students who apply after the start of their course may be disadvantaged, e.g. they may not be reimbursed for tuition fees already paid for modules from which they are subsequently exempted.

If the applicant has a problem obtaining appropriate evidence in time to meet the ten-week deadline above, they should inform the University and request an extension at the earliest opportunity.

Applicants must not assume RPCEL credits to have been granted until they have received an official statement to that effect, as well as noting that any reduction in the number of credits being studied may prevent them from having the status of full-time student.

Approval Process & Confirmation of Decision

The Admissions Team will advise RPCEL applicants on deadlines for submission of their application and work with Course Leaders to arrange appropriate support, where applicable, to ensure the applicant understands what is required of them.

If the agreed submission deadline is missed by the applicant, the Admissions Team will advise on the next available date by which their application should be received to ensure it can be processed in time for the relevant year of entry.

All RPCEL applications accepted by the Admissions Team will be referred to an RPCEL Assessor (normally the relevant Course Leader).

The RPCEL Assessor will consider the application and, should they require additional information, the applicant will be advised within fifteen working days of the original submission, with an appropriate deadline agreed for the new information to be submitted, taking into account the scope of the

application and any other relevant factors. When the RPCEL Assessor is satisfied that they have all the necessary details to assess the application, they will make a recommendation to the Head of the Postgraduate School.

It is the responsibility of the RPCEL Assessors to ensure they meet marking deadlines to ensure RPCEL submissions are considered by the date as agreed with the applicant.

The RPCEL Assessors will be responsible for submitting assessed applications and accompanying recommendations to the Head of the Postgraduate School, who will consider them for final approval. All RPCEL applications for credit contributing to an award may also require External Examiner approval, which may be sought by the RPCEL Assessor. The decision of the Head of the Postgraduate School will be communicated to the Admissions Team within ten working days of meeting.

The RPCEL applicant will be notified of the decision in writing by the Admissions Team, who will update the applicant's record as appropriate and store the documentation on file. Where the RPCEL application is partially or fully rejected, the letter confirming the decision shall include details of any shortcomings and how they might be rectified should the applicant wish to re-apply.

The Head of the Postgraduate School is responsible for final approval of all RPCEL applications, and all paperwork should be available for internal or external scrutiny, as required. RPCEL claims must be available for scrutiny by External Examiners in accordance with normal BIMM University procedures for assessed work contributing to an award.

Appeals

Applicants may not appeal against the academic or professional judgement of those making the decision on an application. However, the University shall consider a request from an appellant that the decision to reject their application be reviewed on the grounds that:

- There exists new evidence, which can be corroborated, and could not have been brought to the attention of the University prior to the selection process;
- There is evidence of a procedural irregularity connected directly with the process undertaken by the University;
- The decision of the University is, on the basis of the information available, unreasonable;
- There is evidence of prejudice or bias on the part of those involved in the selection process.

Appeals must be made in writing within twenty-eight calendar days of the date of the letter from the University notifying the applicant of the decision. Further details may be found in the University's Appeals Procedure, which is available online.

Complaints

The University is committed to delivering a high quality, efficient and fair admissions service, and it is encouraged that applicants notify the institution of any causes for concern, and areas for improvement. Complaints may be made regarding the services or facilities offered by the University or the actions or behaviour of a member of staff during the process. The outcome of a complaint that is upheld could include an apology or an undertaking to revise procedures. However, it will not usually result in reconsideration of the candidate's application. Candidates who wish to make a complaint may do so in accordance with the University's Complaints Procedure.

Appendix 1: The Harvard Referencing System (HRS)

All written work that uses material from other sources needs to acknowledge the author and location of the cited work. The University asks that applicants use HRS in all essays and written submissions. According to this system, we acknowledge our sources within text (in-text citations) and by including a reference list at the end of the work.

A standard reference list entry takes the following form:

- Author's surname, initial (year of publication) *Title in italics*. Edition. Place of publication: publisher.

For example:

- Peck, J. and Coyle, M. (2005) *The Student's Guide to Writing*. 2nd edn. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

The University's Harvard Referencing Guide will be available to all candidates.

Appendix 2: Generic Portfolio Criteria for Experiential Learning – Guidance for Applicants

A portfolio is an organised folder of information compiled by an applicant with support from University staff. It will contain details of past experiences and accomplishments. It may also contain evidence that the individual has reliably demonstrated the skills, knowledge and understanding to be given recognition to gain exemption, or to gain qualifications or credit towards qualifications.

A Portfolio can be used to gain accreditation and/or exemption, or to decide what continuing education is appropriate. It needs to be concise, well presented and relevant.

Key Features of a Portfolio

The folder should contain details of:

- Skills
- Knowledge
- Understanding
- Achievement

These features can come from:

- Paid employment
- Voluntary work
- Domestic work
- Hobbies and interests
- Education and training

What should be included in the Portfolio:

- A Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- Voluntary work – unpaid
- Domestic work – unpaid
- Hobbies and interests
- Education and training: formal and informal
- List of competencies
- Supporting evidence

Types of Evidence Required

Direct Evidence (your own work)

For example:

- Written reports
- Essays/Poems
- Articles
- Computer courses
- A set of accounts
- Photographs of objects that you have produced
- Practice-based documents
- Reports based on reflection on practice
- Video/audio tapes and analysis relating to the learning outcomes
- Analysis of issues arising in preparing for practice
- Analysis and description of practice activities
- Analysis of training activities in relation to the practice
- Statements from line-managers in relation to practice

Indirect Evidence (what someone else says about you)

For example:

- Testimonials from one or more of the following:
 - Employers
 - Colleagues
 - Business partners
 - Voluntary organisations
 - Teachers/lecturers etc.
- Articles written about you
- Prizes
- Certificates

Laying out the information

You do not have to use a prescribed format to present the material, but you might find the following order useful:

1. Cover page – RPCEL application for (your name)
2. Curriculum Vitae
3. Education and training – indicate the skills, knowledge and understanding which you have acquired through various aspects of your education
4. Work experience and training – indicate the skills, knowledge and understanding you have acquired through employment
5. Voluntary or community work – identify what skills, knowledge and understanding has been acquired
6. Other formal or informal learning experiences for example, captain of a sports team, running a sports club, organising a school trip
7. List of competencies – categorise your skills, knowledge and understanding. For example:
 - Personal skills
 - Good communicator
 - Confident public speaker
 - Ability to assimilate a range of ideas
8. Any areas that do not fall into the above categories which you consider relevant for assessment.

Supporting evidence, for example transcript of a training course showing learning outcomes, should be included in each section alongside the description given of the specific skill, knowledge and understanding you want assessed.